the weekly Standard

AUGUST 25, 2008 $4.95

SOLZHENITSYN'S COURAGE
HARVEY MANSFIELD

THE RETURN OF HISTORY

BY ROBERT KAGAN

A column of Russian tanks rolls into Georgia.

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In the new issue of *Policy Review*

Conservative Internationalism

From Jefferson to Polk to Truman to Reagan

The debate between realists and liberal internationalists leaves no explanation for Ronald Reagan's eclectic foreign policy choices and the extraordinary outcomes he achieved. The conventional foreign policy traditions don't fit. Realists and liberal internationalists try to claim Reagan, but they distort and miss the novelty of his contributions. Others conclude that he is unique and "has become a transcendent historical figure," but not terribly relevant to contemporary debates. Still others argue that Reagan's foreign policy had nothing to do with ending the cold war and that it subsequently wound up in the hands of Reagan impostors, the neoconservatives in the George W. Bush administration, who ran it into the ground in Iraq.

This essay rejects all these conclusions. It argues instead that Ronald Reagan tapped into a new and different American foreign policy tradition that has been overlooked by scholars and pundits. That tradition is "conservative internationalism." Like realism and liberal internationalism, it has deep historical roots. Just as realism takes inspiration from Alexander Hamilton and Teddy Roosevelt and liberal internationalism identifies with Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, conservative internationalism draws historical validation from Thomas Jefferson, James K. Polk, Harry Truman, and Ronald Reagan. These four American presidents did more to expand freedom abroad through the assertive use of military force than any others (Lincoln doing as much or more to expand freedom domestically by force). But they expanded freedom on behalf of self-government, local or national, not on behalf of central or international government, as liberal internationalists advocate, and they used force to seize related opportunities to spread freedom, not to maintain the status quo, as realists recommend. All of these presidents remain enigmas for the standard traditions. The reason? They represent the different and overlooked tradition of conservative internationalism.

—Henry R. Nau

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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Peter W. Rodman, 1943-2008

Last week, when we were on our August hiatus, Washington lost a gentleman, scholar, and selfless public servant, Peter Rodman, at age 64. William Kristol wrote of him on our website as follows:

Peter spent about 20 years serving in difficult and sensitive positions in the White House, the State Department, and the Defense Department. Everyone who worked with him—and I did a little in the first Bush administration—knew that he was both remarkably able and genuinely public-spirited. He didn't seek credit or look out for his own career prospects. He always put the country's interests first, even at the expense of his own personal interests. In other words, he was a patriot.

He was also a remarkable analyst. His 1994 book, *More Precious Than Peace: The Cold War and the Struggle for the Third World*, is a serious and penetrating study. Henry Kissinger's extraordinary memoirs owe much—as Henry has always said—to Peter's assistance. His many articles and editorials for *National Review* repay rereading, as do the two pieces he wrote for us at The Weekly Standard a decade ago ("Mullah Dearest," June 16, 1997; "U.N. Paralysis," Dec. 1, 1997). They are compelling—featuring lapidary and lively prose, mature judgment, and sharp insight.

Particularly worth rereading is Peter's 1981 review in the *American Spectator* of William Shawcross's book on the Nixon-Kissinger Cambodia policy.

Peter's critique is a masterpiece of its genre—and, with Shawcross's reply and Peter's further reply to Shawcross, the whole exchange is a model of engaged and serious high-level argumentation.

And then, a year ago, Shawcross and Rodman wrote an extraordinary and much-noticed joint op-ed on Iraq in the *New York Times* defending the effort to win in Iraq:

> One of us (Mr. Shawcross) published a book, *Sideshow*, that bitterly criticized Nixon administration policy. The other (Mr. Rodman), a longtime associate of Henry Kissinger, issued a rebuttal in the *American Spectator*, defending American policy. Decades later, we have not changed our views. But we agreed even then that the outcome in Indochina was indeed disastrous, both in human and geopolitical terms, for the United States and the region. Today we agree equally strongly that the consequences of defeat in Iraq would be even more serious and lasting.

Peter Rodman was a gentleman—thoughtful, courteous, with a subtle wit that went hand in hand with genuine kindness. When he left government, he was looking forward to years of thinking and writing. It was not to be. When he was stricken with leukemia, he had just about finished a book-length study of all the presidents under whom he had served—Nixon, Ford, Reagan, Bush I and Bush II—and what made them successful or not. This will be a posthumous gift from Peter. ♦

Long Branch, Triumphant

Long-time readers will recall the case of Long Branch, New Jersey—an especially egregious abuse of eminent domain powers described in these pages two years ago by Jonathan V. Last ("Razing New Jersey," Feb. 13, 2006, www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/006/669opxko.asp). The seaside town in North Jersey spent the better part of the '90s working on a redevelopment plan designed to seize private homes near the beach and hand the property over to developers, who would then build luxury condominiums and townhouses on it.

The only hitch was that, to invoke eminent domain, the city had to declare that the properties it wanted were blighted. And the property it wanted was occupied by middle-class families with charming homes. In fact, the city of Long Branch had fallen on such hard times in the 1970s and '80s that these homes were arguably one of the few parts of the town that weren't blighted.

This being New Jersey, the city officials were entangled with the developers in troubling ways. And midway through the taking process, one of the developers was sent to jail for bribing officials in neighboring towns. A Long Branch city councilman also was sent to jail for taking bribes in an unrelated matter.

Nevertheless, the homeowners fought back, taking the matter to court. In June 2006, New Jersey Superior Court Judge Lawrence Lawson found in favor of the city on all counts. It was a remarkable decision, ruling both that it was impossible for any party to second guess the decisions of the municipal executives and that there had been no conflict of interest on the part of those same executives.

Things looked dark in Long Branch as the homeowners appealed. Happily, on August 7, a three-judge panel in the appellate division unanimously reversed Lawson's verdict. They declared that not only had Lawson "misapplied the law," but the city had failed to provide any "substantial evidence" that the houses it wanted to seize were blighted.

The matter has now been kicked back to the trial court, but since the city cannot create new evidence of blight, their claim will likely collapse. And the residents of Long Branch will have deservedly won their long battle. ♦

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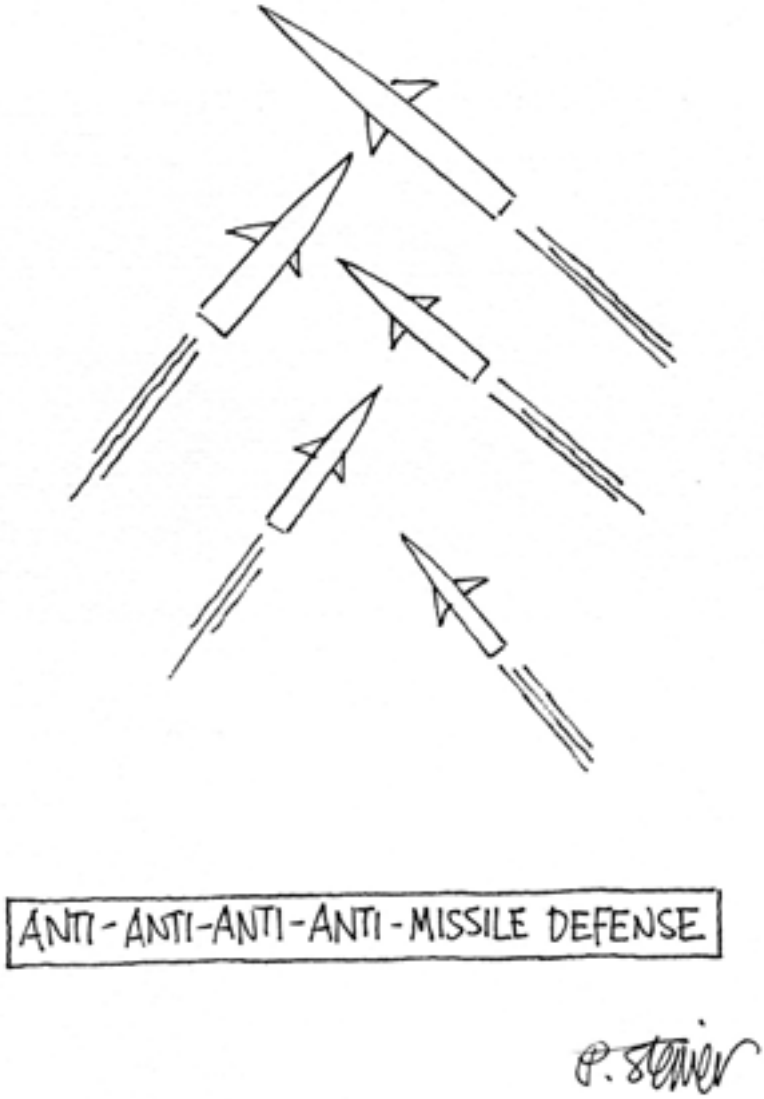

(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of January 13, 2003)

Small Is Crackpot

It's hard to keep up with political labels these days. The excitable men and women of our nation's press get quickly bored and start inventing new tags for newly discovered groups: Homemakers become Soccer Moms and lose ground to Angry White Males as they slowly change into Nascar Dads, while Commuter Couples are transformed into Exurban Cowboys. It's confusing! But one of these silly labels is showing unfortunate staying power—indeed "Big Government Conservative" has proved so popular that it has even spawned its opposite, the "small government conservative." Once upon a time all conservatives were understood to be "small government" types. Back then, what we now call big government conservatives were more commonly known by their rightful name: "liberals."

But that was before everybody got tag-happy. Now there's evidence that all conservatives are assumed by the mainstream press to be big government types. It's the "small government conservatives" who are the anomalies—or worse. Consider this sentence from an article last week in *Politico*: "The idea that there is a secretive plan for a North American Union is a favorite bogeyman for small-government conservatives."

It is? Since when? Do we deny the moon landing too? We were puzzled until it dawned on us. "Small government conservative," in the popular prints, is becoming a synonym for "crackpot." Such a declension in common meaning ought to worry conservatives, at least those who understand the phrase "big government conservatism" for what it is—an oxymoron—and know that "small government conservative," properly understood, is simply a redundancy. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'Can I explain to you what happened? First of all, it happened during a period after she was in remission from cancer. That's no excuse in any possible way for what happened. This is what happened. I grew up as a small town boy in North Carolina . . ." (John Edwards, explaining his extramarital affair to ABC's Bob Woodruff, August 8, 2008) ♦

European Defense Policy Update

'LONDON—Nils Olav already has medals for good conduct and long service. He made honorary colonel-in-chief of the elite Norwegian King's Guard in 2005. And on Friday he was knighted. Not bad for a 3-foot tall penguin . . . [and] resident of Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland." ("King Penguin Receives Norwegian Knighthood," AP, August 15, 2008) ♦

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Casual

Jon From Alexandria

Midlife crises come early to the perpetual adolescent. Mine began, in a slow, simmering way during the summer of my thirty-second year. I felt pangs of mortality and decrepitude. Worse, I saw the gradual creep of grown-up responsibility leaching into my life. So I latched, quite suddenly, onto the idea of becoming a surfer.

Surfing promised salvation. Surfers are hardbodied and cool. When you think of a surfer, you see a tan, lean 20-year-old with wind-blown, devil-may-care hair. Even old surfers are cool. There is a proud tradition of middle-aged rebels cruising waves on 10-foot longboards, every ride a rebuke to adulthood and the grave. I was determined to become one of these dudes. If possible, without doing any actual surfing.

So I started buying surf gear. There were the hip surfer sunglasses and the tragically expensive surf watch. (In addition to time and date, it tells the height of the tide, the moon phase, and the spring/neap cycle.) There were other purchases too embarrassing to recount here, but none provided more than passing comfort. Then last summer I had a conversion experience.

I was swimming in the waters off North Carolina's Emerald Isle. A lone surfer sat on his board, a little way to my left; he began pointing in my direction as a good-sized wave crested in front of me. As the wave broke, a gray bottlenose dolphin jumped out from the foam. He wasn't more than a yard or two away, almost near enough to touch: For an instant he was suspended in the air, his mouth hanging open in a grin. We locked eyes, then he splashed down and swam off.

I like to think that if I had been present at the apparition at Fatima or Guadalupe or Knock I would not have hesitated to believe. In any case, I wasn't about to ignore a surfing dolphin. I signed up for lessons and started surfing for real.

It's been a year now, and I've reached a minimal level of competence. But along the way I discovered that surf culture isn't quite what I had hoped it would be. For instance, most surfers aren't effortlessly cool. Actually, they put rather a lot of effort into it. And instead of viewing the world with laid-back bonhomie, they build up little communities that gossip about each other. Cruise any online surfing forum and you'll see surfers railing against "kooks"—people learning to surf—for somehow destroying the sport.

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The offputting provincialism isn't just online. Peter Kreeft is a philosophy professor at Boston College who, at 70, has been surfing for most of his life. In his charming book *I Surf, Therefore I Am*, he recounts meeting another surfer on the water in California. When this fellow found out that Kreeft lived in New England, he replied, "You're crazy. Or else you're not really a surfer. You don't really love to surf."

This obsession with what makes a real, versus a fake, surfer is part of surf culture. As is the claim to have surfed really big and perilous waves. Almost every surfer I've met says he's surfed the mammoth—and very dangerous—waves at Mavericks in California or the North Shore on Oahu. Maybe they all have. But it strikes me a bit like the number of Frenchmen who, after the war, said they had been active in the Resistance.

For my own part, I have no desire to conquer 25-foot monsters. I don't aspire to anything more than surfing mediocrity. Because I've found that the pleasures of surfing do not lie in achievements.

Like all sports, surfing is physically enjoyable—riding a wave feels good in the same way that hitting a line-drive does. Surfing also provides an element of adventure. People tend to worry about sharks, but the biggest danger is your surfboard: You're tethered to a large, rigid device designed to collect, focus, and redirect force. When someone dies surfing, the board is usually responsible. Mind you, surfing isn't really dangerous—it's not like serving in the Marines. But it's risky enough to provide the occasional thrill and every so often to require some physical courage.

Yet most of the time, surfing is radically peaceful. I treasure sitting on my board, bobbing in the water just beyond the break. I try to stay apart from other surfers. The waves drown out manmade noises, and when I face the horizon, the only other creatures I see are low-flying pelicans and the occasional dolphin. I've learned to take comfort in the realization that the waves roll in, one after another, whether or not I turn to catch them. Whether or not I'm even there.

A man can measure time by the shifting of his pretensions. I used to want to be part of the surfer culture; now I just want to surf. Dude.

Jonathan V. Last

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A Nation of Whiners?

Andrew Ferguson's "We Can't Handle the Truth" (July 28) omitted mention of Phil Gramm's other cardinal offense (besides his challenge to the popular mired-in-recession paradigm). This was to describe America as a "nation of whiners." May I suggest this as the topic for a second installment by Ferguson?

A vivid example of the whiner-nation problem was just provided in a *Wall Street Journal* story ("Optimism Grows Among China's Urban Dwellers," July 23) about findings of the Pew Global Attitudes Project. Only 20 percent of Americans surveyed considered their economic situation good. By contrast, Brazilians (41 percent), Egyptians (44 percent), Tanzanians (48 percent), Germans (53 percent), Indians (62 percent), Australians (69 percent), and Chinese (82 percent) ranked their economies as good.

Do these numbers correspond to the relative levels of wealth, income, or economic security in the countries surveyed? Well, no. Has recent economic history been so much worse for America than for Tanzania, Germany, or China, as these numbers suggest? Not exactly.

Something is indeed seriously wrong with America, but it's not the economy.

Holt Ruffin
Mill Valley, Calif.

Colorado Blues

As a northern Colorado transplant and GOP partisan, I appreciated Fred Barnes's exposition of "The Colorado Model" (July 21) that evidently has helped turn my adopted state from "red" to "blue." His was simply good reporting, thorough, well sourced, and free of innuendo and wisecracks.

The Democrats have been thoughtful and strategic in this critical western state. Results are plain for all to see. It's clear that the good guys must play catch up. I look forward to Barnes's reporting from Denver later this summer.

Lou Cartier
Greeley, Colo.

Fred Barnes's "The Colorado Model" (July 21) is the best political article of the year. The Left is finding that long-term investing in infrastructure is more effective than funding political parties or last-minute television blitzes. Too bad their policies are so pernicious.

Government is too important to be left to politicians, bureaucrats, or left-wing elitists. Leading citizens need to

step forward to fund and guide independent organizations to defend and extend freedom.

A great example is American Majority, led by Ned Ryun, which is training potential candidates to be effective leaders in state and local government.

The Sam Adams Alliance is pleased to be supporting their efforts and similar efforts to help citizens reclaim control of our government.

Eric O'Keefe
Chairman, Sam Adams Alliance
Chicago, Ill.

Newsweek's Follies

The "Obamaweek" piece in the Scrapbook (July 28) was quite revealing, to say the least. Five cover issues on Obama in *Newsweek* this year already—and who knows how many more to come. Yes, he is *Newsweek*'s darling, and there will be still more cover stories I'm sure.

Another striking contrast that was not included in this short piece is the fact that the magazine has supplied only two cover stories on McCain thus far in 2008 (February 11 and February 18). How can five cover stories to two be considered unbiased coverage?

Glenn R. Wittig
Fort Worth, Texas

The Scrapbook's column on Sen. Obama's frequent placement on *Newsweek*'s cover reminded me, a former *Newsweek* subscriber, of the magazine's similar fawning over Bill Clinton in 1992. I recall vividly that Clinton seemed to be on *Newsweek*'s cover at least once a month, as the magazine did its best to get him elected.

Mark Adams
Gig Harbor, Wash.

Lessons from Britain

I mean it when I say that Fred Barnes should win a Pulitzer for his article "First, Lose Three Straight Elections" (August 4). It captures an angle that helps illuminate our own reality.

In the past, I have been intrigued by the British system of government (of course, I prefer ours), especially when listening to Blair in the House of Commons on satellite radio when he was prime minister. You captured this so well in your piece. You have hit on what I believe is the issue that the Republicans should unveil—revamping education in the United States once and for all. What a great article!

Tom Quitzau
Houston, Texas

• • •

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It's time for Congress to listen to the American people. We need to increase energy efficiency. We need more energy from all sources. And we need to develop America's oil and natural gas resources for the benefit and security of America.

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What Is To Be Done?

The Cold War isn't back. The Russian attacks on Georgia don't mean American soldiers will soon be staring at Red Army soldiers in the middle of Germany or that U.S. defense spending must triple to match a global Russian military juggernaut. But Vladimir Putin's aggression, and the justifications offered for it by Russian leaders, could nevertheless mark a historic turning point. They are a deliberate assault on the structure of international norms and on Western credibility.

The West's response to this assault has so far been anemic. American rhetoric about Russia's actions has been strong but has not deterred Putin from pushing even harder. France's president, Nicholas Sarkozy, went from Moscow to Tbilisi with a Russian ultimatum in his hand disguised as a compromise armistice. Georgia's president, Mikhail Saakashvili, signed it while parts of his country were occupied by Russian troops and Russian military aircraft circled overhead. If Sarkozy believes that he has brought peace in our time, he's in for a disappointment. The countries that responded most courageously are those most vulnerable to the imperialistic precedent Putin is attempting to establish—the Baltic States, Ukraine, Poland, and Azerbaijan. The choice before the West now is very clear: We either help those states—and Georgia—protect themselves, or we serve as midwife to a reborn Russian Empire and an international order that is red in tooth and claw.

Saakashvili's decision to send troops into South Ossetia was not an unprovoked act of aggression that somehow justifies Moscow's response. Since Kosovo's declaration of independence in February—an event that the Russians, strong allies of Serbia, violently opposed—Putin has steadily escalated tensions between Georgia and its two breakaway enclaves, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russian aircraft have downed Georgian unmanned aerial vehicles over Abkhazia. Russia nearly doubled the number of "peacekeepers" in that territory for no very good reason. South Ossetian forces have shelled and raided Georgian areas. Tbilisi's response to these provocations was generally aggressive in tone but more mild in action. It is not entirely clear why Saakashvili decided on August 7 to respond more directly to the most recent provocations, but he acted exclusively on his own territory (South Ossetia is still legally part of Georgia) and in defense of his own citizens under attack.

In the process, Georgian troops fought Russian peacekeepers in Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia. If Moscow had restricted itself to protecting its peacekeepers, even perhaps to the extent of sending temporary reinforcements to ensure their safety, the conflict and its consequences would still have remained limited. But Putin did no such thing. Through President Dmitri Medvedev, whose status as a figurehead was confirmed in this crisis, Putin ordered an armored unit in nearby Vladikavkaz to secure Tskhinvali and sent in airborne reinforcements from as far away as St. Petersburg. He also expanded the conflict from South Ossetia to Abkhazia, where the Georgians had taken no action that could conceivably be construed as provocative. Abkhazian forces, with Russian assistance, drove Georgian troops out of Abkhazia. Putin sent more than 6,000 additional Russian troops into Abkhazia in violation of Russia's international engagements in the area. Russia's Black Sea fleet moved to the Abkhazian coast and began searching vessels and firing on Georgian boats. And Russian military aircraft began an extensive bombing campaign that targeted the bases of every single combat unit in the Georgian army, as well as command-and-control nodes, radar installations, and other Georgian infrastructure. All of these actions stand in flagrant violation of Russian agreements with Georgia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the United Nations.

The Russian excuses for these actions insult the intelligence. Medvedev justified the invasion by announcing Moscow's obligation to protect "the dignity and lives of Russian citizens" whether on Russian soil or not (Moscow had given out thousands of Russian passports to South Ossetians making them "Russian citizens"). The Russian equivalent of our attorney general, prompted by Medvedev, proclaimed that Russian law allows "foreign citizens and individuals without citizenship, not currently living in the Russian Federation, who have committed crimes outside the boundaries of the Russian Federation, to have criminal actions brought against them in the event that the crimes are directed against the interests of the Russian Federation." Following on this, the Russian political and judicial leadership made clear that it is building a legal case against Saakashvili and other Georgian officials to be tried in Russian courts under Russian law—in addition to charges of "genocide" Russia intends to make against Saakashvili in international tribunals. The Russian military has also asserted that it can insist upon the disarmament of foreign military forces stationed on their own soil that have not attacked or threatened to attack Russia if, in the sole opinion of the Russian military leadership, those forces pose a threat to Russian troops—and that it can attack and forcibly disarm those troops if they do not comply.

Thus we see Putin's playbook for the restoration of the

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Russian Empire. Every former Soviet Republic has a significant population of Russians—in some states more than half the population is ethnically Russian. Moscow has now asserted that it can use military force to defend not only the lives but the "dignity" of those "citizens." It has asserted that Russian Federation law applies not only to those citizens, but to the non-Russian leaders in whose countries they live. And it has asserted that it can use military force preemptively on foreign soil if it sees a threat to its forces or to its "citizens." If these assertions are allowed to stand, the independence of the former Soviet republics is effectively at an end.

That is why the Estonian parliament met in extraordinary session last weekend to ask that NATO offer expedited membership to Georgia. It is why the three Baltic presidents and the president of Poland condemned Russia's actions. It is why Azerbaijan, immediately after the Russian invasion, declared that Saakashvili's initial actions had been legally justified. It is why Ukraine threatened to prevent the Black Sea fleet from returning to its leased port facilities in Sevastopol if it participated in military operations against Georgia (which it did—and the flotilla has since moved to the Russian port of Novorossiisk).

These forthright declarations and actions have exposed all of these countries—including four NATO allies—to Russia's wrath, which Moscow has been quick to show. Russian media responded to Ukraine's announcement with denunciations of Ukrainian military assistance to Georgia—tensions between Moscow and Kiev right now are very high. The West must defend Saakashvili and Georgia and help these other courageous young democracies defend themselves against Russian retribution.

Hitherto, American military assistance has focused on helping our allies help us. We have frowned on efforts by Russia's neighbors to build large reserve forces that could resist a Russian invasion, to buy advanced air defense systems that could protect threatened airspace, or to develop anti-tank capabilities needed to halt Russian armored columns. That is why, for all the military assistance we've given Georgia over the years, the Georgian military crumbled in the face of a limited Russian attack.

In addition to the many good ideas for responding to Russia's aggression that have been proposed elsewhere—expanding NATO, stalling WTO negotiations, kicking Russia out of the G-8—Washington should offer a revamped military assistance program to our NATO allies in Eastern Europe, as well as to Ukraine and Georgia. This program should aim to turn each of those states into a daunting porcupine capable of deterring the Russian bear. We should drop our resistance to the creation of large trained reserves in those countries alongside the small professional militaries we are already helping to create. And we should expand our military advisory presence so that we can help threatened states have the capability to respond to unforeseen Russian attack by denying Russian aircraft control of the skies and Russian tanks free entry into their territory.

All of these actions are defensive. We need not give Russia's neighbors advanced tanks, strike aircraft, or long-range precision weapons. NATO should extend a guarantee to Georgia and Ukraine, but this program could help deter Russian aggression even without such a guarantee. The aims of this effort are very different from our Cold War strategy. We would not be trying to contain Russia in the expectation that it would ultimately collapse of its own contradictions. We would simply be trying to assist independent, sovereign states to protect themselves, and thereby helping persuade Russia to engage the world like any other responsible member of the international community, something that the Russians—in contrast to the Soviets—constantly claim that they are endeavoring to do.

In its own interest and in the interests of its allies, America must reject Vladimir Putin's attempts to rewrite international law to suit Russia's revanchist ambitions. We must reject the Russian fairy tale that aid to Russia's neighbors is a threat to Russia. And we must reject the idea that helping Russia's neighbors stand up to Moscow will create a new Cold War that appeasement would somehow avoid.

—Frederick W. Kagan, for the Editors

Blaming the Victim

Blaming the victim is nothing new. But, in the days since Russian tanks first rolled into democratic Georgia, we have been rather surprised at the alacrity with which some—on both the left and right—have blamed that tiny country for the onslaught, and the West for encouraging Georgia's liberalization. That encouragement, it has been argued, led Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili to believe he could use military force to quell insurgents in the breakaway province of South Ossetia, thereby all but guaranteeing Russian dictator Vladimir Putin's retaliatory assault. This is not just a foolish argument, it is a pernicious one. It masks the true nature of the conflict and assumes that all the actors in this drama are moral equals. They are not.

Putin has been pressuring Georgia for years. Indeed, Russian despots have long considered the southern Caucasus, along with Eastern Europe and the Baltic States, their personal stomping grounds. There is no need to rehearse the long, complicated, and bloody history; suffice it to say that the tradition did not end with the Soviet empire. In the Caucasus, for example, Russia almost certainly had a hand in the fall of Georgian nationalist president Zviad Gamsakhurdia in 1992, as well as that of Azerbaijan's president Abulfaz Elchibey in 1993. Both were replaced by pro-Moscow strongmen. But Russian hegemony over Georgia was upset in November 2003, when

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the pro-Western democrat Saakashvili came to power.

Saakashvili cuts a colorful figure. And his rise set a powerful example. The Rose Revolution that ushered in a new era for Georgia was the first of the "color revolutions" bringing youthful democrats to Russia's near abroad. That is probably why Putin, who on his borders seeks client autocracies, has done so much to undermine it. He has used Georgia's territorial conflicts with the breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia to weaken Saakashvili personally and undermine the Georgian people's national aspirations. To that end, Russia began to distribute passports to the Abkhazians and South Ossetians as early as 2004. It used its power to appoint Russians and pro-Moscow locals to positions in the territories' independent governments. And it built up its military presence in both places under the guise of peacekeeping operations.

At first the warfare was economic. "Trouble started brewing in 2006," writes Edward Lucas in *The New Cold War*, "when from March to May Russia imposed an escalating series of import restrictions, first on wine, vegetables, and fruits; then on sparkling wine and brandy, finally Georgian mineral water—at the time one of the country's most important exports." That July, Lucas continues, "Russia abruptly closed the only legal land border crossing" with Georgia. It was the equivalent of a blockade. Georgia had done nothing to provoke these punitive measures. It was Saakashvili and democracy that offended Putin.

On September 27, 2006, Saakashvili ordered the arrest of four Russian GRU officers whom he accused of plotting a coup. He paraded them in front of the cameras. Moscow was not amused. Putin recalled his ambassador from Tbilisi and, according to Lucas, "cut postal, phone, and banking links with Georgia." Gazprom, the Russian energy giant, announced a price spike specific to Georgia. The following month Putin's government began to detain and expel ethnic Georgians living in Russia—more than 2,300 of them, according to a report by Human Rights Watch.

Some were Russian citizens. "Russian authorities denied basic rights to many of the detained," the authors from Human Rights Watch wrote, "including access to a lawyer or the possibility of appealing the expulsion decision taken against them. Most were given trials lasting only a few minutes. Georgians were held in sometimes appalling conditions of detention and in some cases were subjected to threats and other ill-treatment. Two Georgians died in custody awaiting expulsion."

In March 2007, Russian military forces attacked villages in Abkhazia that had recently fallen under Georgian control. This was an illegal act, and when the United Nations investigated the incident Moscow did not cooperate. Another attack—one that failed—occurred in Georgia proper, near Tbilisi, in August 2007. Russian intransigence followed that incident, too.

Then, in April, Putin issued an order that, according to Johns Hopkins professor Svante E. Cornell, treated Abkhazia and South Ossetia "as parts of the Russian Federation." Also around this time, Russian MiGs began destroying Georgian unmanned aerial vehicles. Russia increased its troop deployment in Abkhazia. And in July, as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was about to visit Georgia, Russian jets flew over South Ossetia in a show of force. Also that month, thousands of Russian troops went to the Georgian frontier for so-called "training exercises." According to the *New York Times*, Russian cyberattacks on Georgian computer networks began "as early as July 20."

Such was the pattern of Russian belligerence prior to Saakashvili's commitment of ground forces to South Ossetia in early August. Russia views that decision, of course, as its casus belli. But even here, the story may be more complicated than Georgian provocation and Russian reaction. For his part, Saakashvili wrote in the *Washington Post* last week that "a massive assault was launched on Georgian settlements" in South Ossetia just hours after his government sent a peace envoy to the territory.

"Our government then learned," Saakashvili went on, "that columns of Russian tanks and troops had crossed Georgia's sovereign borders. The thousands of troops, tanks and artillery amassed on our border are evidence of how long Russia had been planning this aggression." So Saakashvili sent in his troops, and the war began.

Whatever the precise sequence of events, however, nothing Saakashvili did provided a reason for Putin to invade Georgia proper; or to bomb Georgian targets in the days after the initial ceasefire; or to charge Saakashvili with crimes against humanity; or to attempt regime change in a democracy that abides by international norms and seeks integration in the liberal international order. Nothing.

Nor is it true that the ultimate blame for this conflict lies with the United States and its NATO and EU allies. It is true that these nations and alliances encourage democratic governance, free markets, and the promotion of human rights in all countries, including those in Russia's near abroad. And it may well be that Russia sees many of the independent states on its borders, so long under its hegemony, moving in a liberal direction. But why does Russia feel threatened by this? And what say ought Russia to have over the decisions of other governments to choose freedom and prosperity?

No one forced Georgia or Ukraine or Poland or Latvia or Lithuania or Estonia to move toward Europe and the United States. The elected leaders of those countries decided for themselves. And they made that decision partly because they understand the distinctions between dominance and submission, freedom and slavery, prosperity and penury, aggression and comity. They lived those distinctions. Is it too much to ask that we learn from our friends, and call a culprit a culprit and a victim a victim?

—Matthew Continetti, for the Editors

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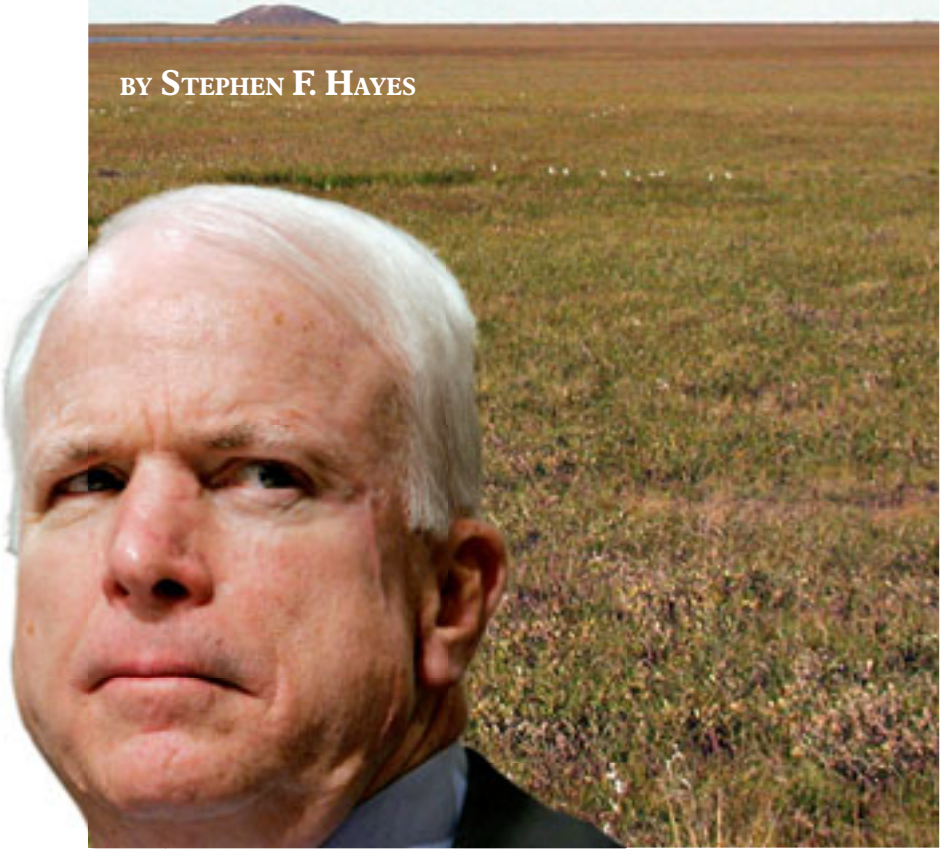
To Drill, or Not to Drill

Will McCain change his mind about Alaskan oil?

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES



Pontiac, Michigan

Republican presidential candidate John McCain says that he's taking another look at the possibility of drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, and as part of that assessment McCain says that he plans to talk to the nation's most prominent advocate of drilling in ANWR, Alaska governor Sarah Palin.

McCain has opposed drilling in ANWR. In the past he's compared it to drilling in the Grand Canyon. But as energy prices climbed over the past several months, he has been careful to avoid locking himself into an anti-drilling position. In late June, McCain told voters in Missouri and Minnesota that he was open to receiving new information about exploration on Alaska's coastal plain, but noted: "I certainly haven't changed my position."

In an interview with THE WEEKLY STANDARD aboard his campaign plane last week, McCain made clear he has not ruled out a change in his position—to one that endorses drilling in ANWR. "I continue to examine it," he said. So does his staff. McCain's campaign has been quietly studying the ANWR issue and discussing the potential consequences—good and bad—of a policy change.

But in our conversation on August 13, McCain added a new wrinkle. When I asked him if he had consulted Palin about ANWR, he said that he had not yet done so. He added, "I probably should," he said. "I will."

So I called Palin to ask what McCain can expect to hear. The answer is that Palin, who has been mentioned as a possible McCain running mate but has not been vetted, will make a straightforward case for drilling in ANWR. She says McCain's willingness to take another look at ANWR is "very encouraging."

"It bodes well for him as a pragmatic and wise and experienced statesman," says Palin. "What he's doing here is he's calling an audible when conditions on the field are changing. And that's what you do if you want to win the game here. One of the pieces of a solution is allowing exploration on that little 2,000 acre plot of land out of the 20 million acres up there in the coastal plain."

The 2,000 acres that Palin refers to is the area that a drilling site would require—"smaller than the size of LAX," as she puts it. "With new technology and directional drilling and other measures that can be taken today to minimize even that footprint. We know that this can be done safely and this can be managed well."

She added: "And I know up here in Alaska, most every Alaskan believes that ANWR should be drilled, and no one cares more about Alaska's environment—our lands, our wildlife, our fresh air, our clean water—than Alaskans themselves. And we know that this can be allowed safely, cleanly, ethically—this type of exploration and development of an American supply of energy."

That last point could be significant. When McCain changed his position on offshore drilling earlier this summer, he did so on federalist grounds. If states believe that drilling can be safely done off their shores, and choose to allow it, he argued, the federal government should no longer

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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stand in their way. He could make the same argument on ANWR.

Still, in our interview, McCain noted that Americans are "far more ambivalent" about drilling in a national wildlife refuge than they are about offshore oil exploration. He's right. Polling on offshore drilling consistently shows supporters outnumber opponents by at least two-to-one.

But if Americans are more ambivalent about drilling in ANWR, a strong majority still supports doing so. A Zogby poll taken in late June found that 59 percent of likely voters favor drilling in ANWR—a result that included support from 57 percent of independents and even 40 percent of Democrats. A Pew Research poll taken at the same time put support for drilling in ANWR at 50 percent (with 43 percent opposed), and a FoxNews/Opinion Dynamics poll found that 53 percent supported drilling. More recently, 55 percent of respondents in an ABC News/Planet Green/Stanford University poll said the U.S. government should "allow drilling for oil in U.S. wilderness areas where it's currently not allowed" (with 43 percent opposed).

Palin, who caused a stir earlier this month by praising Barack Obama's proposal to tap Alaska's natural gas potential, believes McCain could chip away at that opposition by educating voters. "It's been grossly misunderstood on many fronts. When you see the pictures, the visuals used in the opponents' message—and usually this is extreme environmentalists—their message as to why ANWR shouldn't be touched, you see pictures of mountains and rivers and beautiful green valleys. That's not ANWR. ANWR is a flat, barren plain that is very, very rich in resources."

Democrats seem to understand that most Americans don't share their views on domestic drilling. Last week, under pressure from Democratic colleagues tired of being hammered by Republicans as obstructionists, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi backed down from her months-long opposition to allowing a House vote on measures to expand offshore drilling.

Pelosi's climb down followed Barack Obama's attempt to refine his position earlier this month with this convoluted, four-qualifier statement. "My interest is in making sure we've got the kind of comprehensive energy policy that can bring down gas prices," he said. "If, in order to get that passed, we have to compromise in terms of a careful, well thought-out drilling strategy that was carefully circumscribed to avoid significant environmental damage—I don't want to be so rigid that we can't get something done."

Sarah Palin

For months, McCain had worked hard to portray Obama as "Dr. No" on energy. With his statement, Obama became Dr. Maybe-Under-the-Right-Circumstances. It was a subtle shift, but Obama could plausibly claim that he was open to offshore drilling and that his position was not much different from his opponent's. McCain advisers are eager to restore a sharp contrast on energy and say they're skeptical Obama will ever voice support, however qualified, for drilling in ANWR.

Last Friday, McCain had breakfast in Aspen, Colorado, with Texas oilman T. Boone Pickens, who has taken out television ads to promote his efforts to end American dependence on foreign oil. After the breakfast, Pickens told reporters that he had pushed McCain to drill in ANWR. McCain, Pickens continued, "said that he hadn't decided to do that . . . yet. But it was, you know, still an open question."

Others whom McCain trusts on energy issues also believe he should support drilling in ANWR. Last month, McCain met with Rock Zierman, CEO of the California Independent Petroleum Association and several other independent petroleum producers from the state. They told McCain that they could significantly increase output from offshore oil rigs within months, not years—as those opposed to more drilling have suggested. McCain clearly found them credible. While we were chatting he asked Brooke Buchanan, his press secretary, to check on a letter that Zierman and his colleagues promised to send outlining the benefits of increased offshore drilling. He wants the campaign to use it to support his position on offshore drilling. "They're not ExxonMobil," McCain said. "They are independent petroleum guys from Bakersfield, California."

When I spoke to Zierman on Friday, he said that their conversation had focused on offshore drilling and that McCain hadn't asked about ANWR. If he had, however, he would have discovered that Zierman, too, supports drilling there. "We support light natural gas coming into California," he says. "We support nuclear—even though it competes with our products, it's good for the country. And we support drilling in ANWR."

McCain isn't there yet. His advisers do not know where he'll end up. But he hasn't compared ANWR to the Grand Canyon since early June. And Sarah Palin can be persuasive. ♦

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European Disunion

Russia is far from the only issue dividing the EU.

BY KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN

Like the Balkan wars of the 1990s, the Russian invasion of Georgia reveals Europe's weakness and disunity in crisis. In fact, many of the debates that have separated the Bush administration from various European governments have also divided European governments from each other, with disagreements on a range of issues like Iran, terrorism, Russia, and the Mediterranean Union. The underlying tension between French president Nicolas Sarkozy and German chancellor Angela Merkel throws the growing schism into sharp relief.

Consider Sarkozy's proposal for a Mediterranean Union that would be similar to the European Union and would boost cooperation among European, North African, and Middle Eastern governments. When he first began promoting the idea in 2007, the union was to include only countries that bordered the Mediterranean Sea. The exclusion of Germany caused Merkel to object strongly, calling the plan "very dangerous" and fearing it would undermine the EU and erode Berlin's strategic clout. After some passionate negotiating—Sarkozy adviser Henri Guaino told the *Financial Times* that "there was a lively debate, a very intense, stormy discussion," and EU diplomats were quoted elsewhere as saying that Sarkozy and Merkel "had quite a fight"—French and German officials agreed to include all 27 EU countries. But suspicions linger in Berlin and elsewhere that Sarkozy's true goal in forming the union was to expand France's sphere of influence at Germany's expense.

Kenneth R. Weinstein is CEO of the Hudson Institute.

There are broader worries across Europe that Paris will use its six-month tenure as EU president—which began on July 1—in the service of French national interests. Sarkozy has proved to be audacious, and at times unpredictable. Whereas Merkel has consistently embraced multilateralism, the French president has shown a greater penchant for national initiatives. He has also moved France closer to the U.S. positions on Iran and terrorism.

> Ever since Franco-German opposition to the Iraq war was portrayed as 'European' opposition—never mind that Britain, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Poland, and other countries supported the invasion—the media have treated Europe as a monolith.

Sarkozy has been distinctly more hawkish on Iran than Merkel, describing the threat of a nuclear Iran as the world's "most serious" crisis. Last August, he caused a stir by declaring that a policy of tough sanctions and incentives "is the only one that can enable us to avoid being faced with an alternative that I call catastrophic: an Iranian bomb or the bombing of Iran."

Germany has recently edged nearer to the French position, but it has traditionally been more resistant to harsh economic sanctions, given the extensiveness of German business interests in Iran. For a period of time in 2007, when Washington and Paris pushed for robust sanctions, Berlin hedged.

Sarkozy has also been more vocal and aggressive on terrorism. In mid-June, the French government released a new defense policy directive, its first since 1994, which announced the creation of a new defense and national security council and a new national intelligence council, both chaired by the president; advocated "the full participation of France in the structures of NATO"; called for an EU defense force of 60,000 deployable troops; and stressed the need for enhanced anti-terrorism coordination. In a speech marking the white paper's release, Sarkozy said that "the most immediate threat" to France "is that of a terrorist attack."

The defense review sparked a critical reaction from Sarkozy's domestic political opponents. "It's a very Bush-like vision, very American—with a new concept of national security. It puts the entire defense sector in the hands of the president, but also civil security and the police," one Socialist deputy told the *Daily Telegraph*. Sarkozy has also promised to send several hundred additional French combat troops to Afghanistan.

In contrast, Merkel has placed less rhetorical emphasis on fighting terrorism and seemed less committed to the NATO campaign in Afghanistan. Prior to meeting with Barack Obama last month, Merkel urged a lowering of U.S. expectations on Afghanistan. "I will make clear that we are not shirking our responsibilities for engagement, but I will also make the limits very clear, just as I have done with the current president," she said. As in many other areas—including Iran—Merkel has been constrained by left-wing Social Democrats within her broad governing coalition.

The same goes for her Russia policy. After Russia's attack on Georgia, Merkel's immediate reaction, like Barack Obama's, was to avoid assigning blame to the Russians. Prime Minister Berlusconi's policy followed the same path. British Labour MP Denis MacShane, who was U.K. minister for Europe under Tony Blair, dismissed Merkel and Berlusconi in a

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Daily Telegraph op-ed as "right-wing leaders . . . [who] appear to want to give Putin the benefit of the doubt." In contrast, the Balts, the Poles, and the Swedes have been Georgia's most steadfast allies in the EU. After their visit of solidarity to Georgia this week, the Estonian, Lithuanian, and Polish presidents and the Latvian prime minister offered a joint statement that effectively criticized the EU-led peace initiative brokered by President Sarkozy for failing to address "the principal element—the respect of [the] territorial integrity of Georgia." In Tbilisi on Tuesday, Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt sounded surprisingly like John McCain, noting that "Russia will sooner or later have to pay a high price" for her action.

Russia remains an especially difficult question; but it is only one of many hot-button issues on which Europe is divided. For example: Britain favors Turkish membership in the EU, while France and Germany are fiercely opposed. On global trade expansion and the Doha Round, Merkel and Gordon Brown have been devoted free traders, while Sarkozy has been more protectionist (drawing the ire of EU trade chief Peter Mandelson). Merkel and Sarkozy have also sparred over the European Central Bank. Not surprisingly, NATO expansion and European military cooperation remain stubbornly divisive. As for global warming and slashing carbon emissions, there is even less harmony, with France at the head of the protectionist group that recognizes the need to preserve jobs in energy-intensive industries.

Unfortunately, ever since Franco-German opposition to the Iraq war was portrayed as "European" opposition—never mind that Britain, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Poland, and other countries supported the invasion—the American media have treated Europe as a monolith. That is misleading, as the next U.S. president will swiftly discover. The true measure of European foreign policy unity should be judged on the basis of coherence under pressure. After Georgia, it has once again been found deeply lacking. ♦

China Looks Across the Strait

Events in Georgia bode ill for Taiwan.

BY DAN BLUMENTHAL & CHRISTOPHER GRIFFIN

For Beijing, Russia's invasion of Georgia has been a mixed blessing. Vladimir Putin stole China's limelight during the Olympics' opening ceremonies with a fireworks display of his own in the Caucasus and embarrassed his Chinese hosts. On the other hand, Putin's Olympics offensive has a long-term upside for Beijing: that the West dithered during the invasion of an upstart democracy must have provided comfort to those in China who want to settle the Taiwan issue by force.

The U.S. response to the invasion of Georgia was embarrassing. President Bush chose not to interrupt his Beijing itinerary of watching basketball and beach volleyball, and his administration's lackadaisical actions sent a clear message to his Chinese hosts about waning American will to stand by its allies. The initial call by both presidential candidate Barack Obama and President Bush that both aggressor and victim stand down must have been music to China's ears.

For years China has been selling the argument that Taiwan is a provocateur. Beijing argued throughout the administration of independence-leaning Taiwan president Chen Shui-bian that "separatists" in Taipei had hijacked Chinese "compatriots" on the island who really want unification with the Chinese motherland. Remove the separatists, China's rhetoric went, and Taiwan will return to the motherland—allow them to govern, and China will one day have to attack.

Dan Blumenthal is a resident fellow and Christopher Griffin a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

The election of the more accommodationist President Ma Ying-jeou has somewhat stalled China's belligerence, but Taiwan is a democracy and the "separatists" will be voted back in one day. The Taiwanese public, moreover, is itself becoming more separatist—only a tiny and diminishing minority wants to unify with China. This fact may explain why, even after Ma's election, China has not halted its military build-up across the Strait: Over 1,000 ballistic missiles, 300 advanced fighters, dozens of submarines and destroyers are poised to wreak havoc on the small, isolated island. As China grows stronger it is no longer fanciful to imagine it pulling a Putin, trumping up any number of Taiwanese "provocations" as a pretext to attack.

The underlying tensions in the Taiwan Strait bear important similarities to those in the Caucasus. Just as authoritarian Russia objects to a democratic, pro-American Georgia, so too authoritarian China sees a democratic, pro-American Taiwan as a gaping wound on its periphery. The main cause of tensions is domestic politics. An authoritarian China, like authoritarian Russia, needs fervent nationalism to retain its shaky legitimacy. The "sacred goal" of reunifying the motherland serves that purpose well.

America's tepid response to Russia's invasion of Georgia has harmed its ability to act as a global deterrent. If Washington was slow in response to Georgia, a country that it sponsored for NATO membership, whose president it feted at the White House in 2006 and that hosted President Bush in 2005 with great fanfare,

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Beijing must wonder if the United States would do anything for isolated Taiwan. Unlike Georgia, Taiwan is a pariah in the international community. Washington's complicity in Taiwan's isolation only tempts Chinese aggression.

While Russia's actions have sent a harmful signal to all would-be aggressors, a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is far from inevitable. The United States can recapitalize its maritime and air forces in the Pacific, and make it clear that it will defend Taiwan from attack. America is a $15 trillion economy that can afford the weapons it needs to keep the peace in the Pacific. While Beijing's military threat to Taiwan should be taken seriously, China is a $3 trillion economy with a host of domestic problems.

In the end, though, the true path to peace in the Strait is a reformed and liberalized China focused on its manifold domestic problems rather than on a bellicose nationalism. ♦

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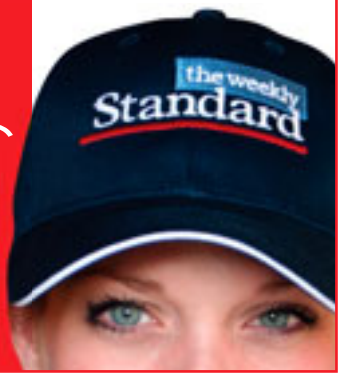

Iraq's Oil Progress

It's impressive, but U.S. lawmakers aren't helping.

BY MICHAEL MAKOVSKY

It is now widely accepted that the surge in American troops helped dramatically improve security in Iraq in the last year. But there has been less notice of, or comment on, how the surge has improved the Iraqi oil sector, which contributes more than two-thirds of the country's gross national product and almost 95 percent of the government's revenue, and remains pivotal to the country's development and stabilization.

Oil production has risen about 25 percent in Iraq in the past year. It had been flat from 2005 through mid-2007, hovering around 2 million barrels per day before beginning to climb to its present level of 2.5 million barrels per day. This is roughly equal to immediate prewar levels. Oil exports are now close to 2 million barrels per day—near Iranian levels—after rarely topping 1.5 million barrels per day in the postwar years.

The rise in Iraqi oil production over the last year already equates roughly to the increase in Saudi output over the last few months that has drawn so much attention and for which President Bush publicly pressed so long.

Oil revenue had already been spiking thanks to soaring oil prices, but with exports now also increasing, it is rising even further. Oil exports could yield at least $60-70 billion this year, more than double the level in 2006 and more than triple the level in 2004. Ballooning revenue will strengthen the central government and offer hope to Iraqis about the future of their country, which should contribute to further stabilization of the country.

Michael Makovsky, foreign policy director of the Bipartisan Policy Center, was a special assistant for Iraqi oil policy in the office of the secretary of defense from 2002 to 2006. He is author of Churchill's Promised Land.

The significantly improved security situation in the north (thanks mostly to the surge and Sunni Awakening) has played a big role in the more consistent functioning of the northern Iraqi export pipeline to Ceyhan, Turkey. Through the first half of 2008, an average 370,000 barrels per day has been exported through the Turkish line, a tenfold increase over last year.

The south yields over 80 percent of Iraq's oil, and security there has also improved, largely as a result of the Iraqi government's spring campaign in Basra against various militias and criminals (aided by American military support). Energy facilities, however, especially those on land approaching the offshore export terminals, remain vulnerable, including to possible action by Iranian allied groups.

Iraqi oil progress can also be seen in the production deals concluded by the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq. The Kurds have awarded rights to more than 20 of their 40 development blocks, with a couple already producing small quantities of oil. But Iraq's oil minister, Hussein Shahristani, has declared these deals illegal, and the U.S. government opposes them as well. Shahristani claims the Kurds cannot proceed until there is a comprehensive hydrocarbons law dividing up Iraq's oil wealth between the regions and threatened to boycott the companies involved.

Iraq has great potential as an oil producer and exporter. It is perhaps the least developed oil exporting country in the world with already the third largest proven oil reserves, and produced as much as 3.5 million barrels per day in 1990 before the Kuwait invasion, the Gulf war, and sanctions. Iraqis have long had plans to reach more than 6 million barrels per day of production, which could be achieved

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within a decade with security and foreign investment. But despite the obvious potential and recent progress, political factors in both the United States and Iraq continue to constrain Iraq's oil sector.

The troubles are most evident in the continuing saga of the potential technical service agreements between Iraq and international oil companies. In the absence of the new hydrocarbon laws, Shahristani sought short-term agreements with several Western oil companies. The companies were to help Iraq increase production by 500,000 barrels per day within two years by the provision of equipment, training, and other aid.

These proposed deals, which reportedly were not the result of a bidding process, were worth about $3 billion and were to be finalized first in March and then in June but faced stiff pressure from opponents of Shahristani, the Maliki government in Baghdad, and the oil companies who weren't included (who feared it would give their competitors a leg up in the bidding for long-term rights to develop Iraq's oil and natural gas fields). In the end Shahristani changed the terms of the deal to force the oil companies to reject them, though it is expected that some form of technical service agreements will be concluded at some point.

Shahristani remains a key obstacle to future development of the oil sector. He came into the job without any oil experience—as his mis-structuring of the technical security agreements showed. He has alienated many of the technocrats in the oil ministry, hurting morale and accelerating a decline in its expertise. A notable example was his recent removal of the highly regarded director general of the South Oil Company, Abdul Jabbar Lauby. Shahristani's inability to spend beyond a small percentage of his budget is partly the result of the oil ministry's declining technical competence. He also has been insensitive to U.S. concerns. For instance, he said at an energy summit in April about $120 oil, "It's not really so high that it's beyond the capacity of most countries to cope with it."

On the American side, opposition by publications such as the *New York Times* and Democratic senators such as Charles Schumer and John Kerry to the agreements encouraged the Iraqi opposition to them. They claimed these deals resulted from American meddling, should not be done absent passage of comprehensive hydrocarbon legislation, would lead to more sectarian fighting over oil, contribute to the perception of corruption and—in the words of the *Times*—the "understandable suspicions" especially in the Arab world that the United States went to war for oil. The *Times* also claimed the projected 500,000 barrels per day increase in production was "minor" in "global terms."

American influence in Iraqi oil policy has been vastly overstated. The emphasis on Iraqi hydrocarbon legislation has been a mistake, one that the White House began and perpetuated. However noble the objective of using oil to help unite the country, the proposed cocktail of oil legislation has so far actually had the effect of pulling the country further apart.

It is important to address the views expressed by these senators and the *Times* collectively in order to make progress in the Iraqi oil sector and the country in general. American influence in Iraqi oil policy has been vastly overstated, as even a quick look at events would show. Also, this emphasis on Iraqi hydrocarbon legislation at the expense of other operational progress in the oil sector has been a mistake, one that the White House began and perpetuated. (See my "Oil's Not Well in Iraq" in The Weekly Standard, February 19, 2007.) However noble the objective of using oil to help unite the country, the proposed cocktail of oil legislation has so far actually had the effect of pulling the country further apart, and the oft-criticized Kurdish deals are actually pressuring Shahristani to make progress.

Further, the idea that more oil production will lead to more sectarian fighting is belied by the facts: There has been more oil output in the last year as sectarian fighting declined, while the pre-surge period was marked by rising sectarian conflict and stagnating oil production. The no-bid nature of the process is debatable but not necessarily condemnable. It is rather curious why American politicians object to American and Western oil companies' getting contracts, as if Iraqi agreements with less competent Russian or Chinese oil companies would serve Iraqi or U.S. commercial and national security interests.

One must wonder, moreover, why so much credibility should be given to the unproven conspiracy theory that five years ago the United States went to war over oil? Indeed, the fear of giving any credence to this conspiracy theory contributed to the insufficient U.S. effort in the Iraqi oil sector from the very beginning.

Finally, no one should scoff at the further possible near-term increase of 500,000 barrels per day in Iraqi oil production and exports that these contracts promised. That figure represents about 20 percent of total global spare, or unused, oil production. Iraqi progress comes at a time when there is little significant growth in oil production anywhere in the world outside of Saudi Arabia. Russian oil production, for instance, is declining after years of tremendous growth, and Venezuelan and Mexican oil production has been in decline for years.

The surge has given new life to Iraq's oil sector. This offers promise in Iraq of a stronger central government, reduced unemployment, greater economic development and resources, more stability, and more barrels of oil in a very tight market that badly needs them. Politicians in the United States and Iraq should be encouraging, not constraining, this progress. ♦

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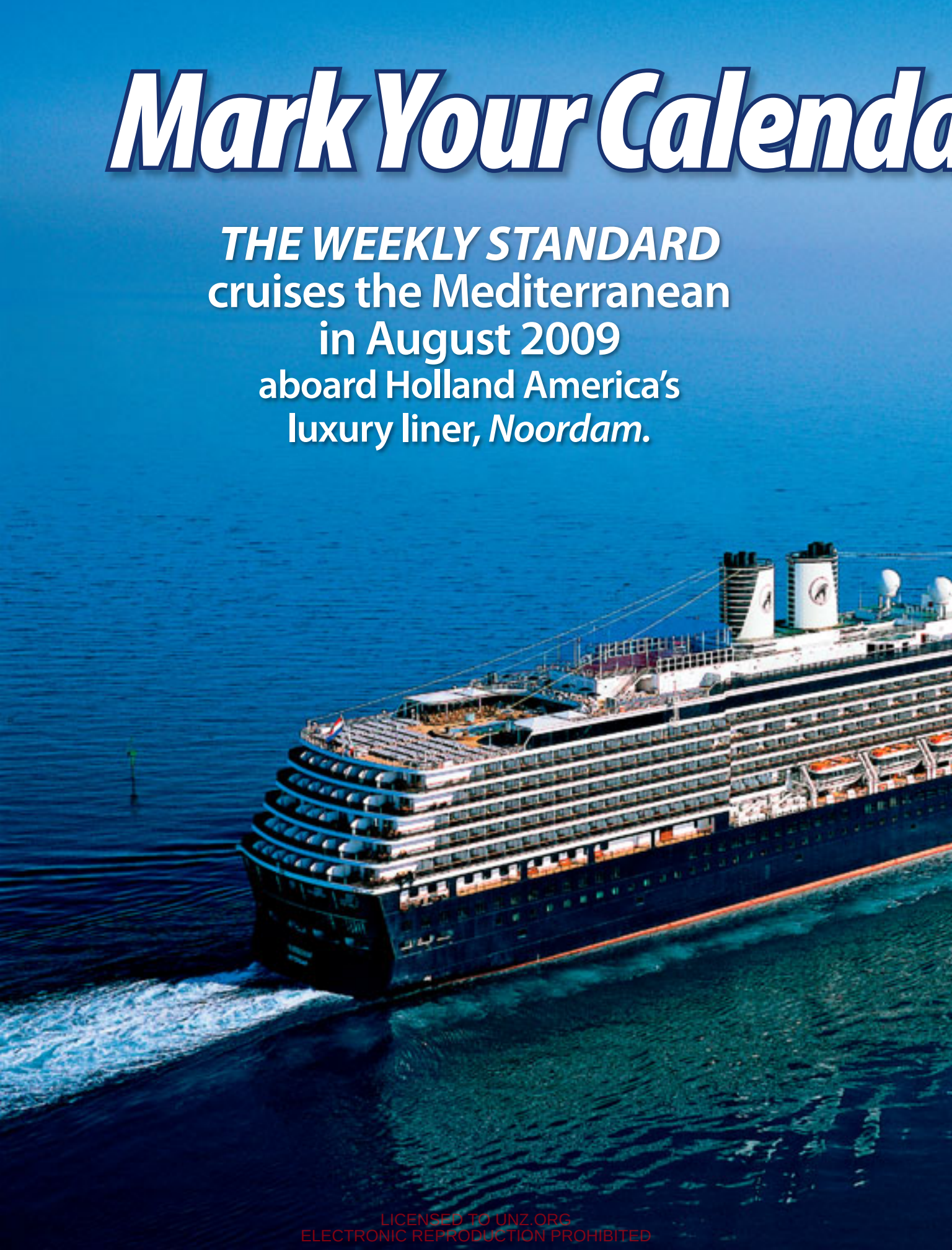

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History's Back

Ambitious autocracies, hesitant democracies

DAVID MDZINARISHVILI / REUTERS

By Robert Kagan

One wonders whether Russia's invasion of Georgia will finally end the dreamy complacency that took hold of the world's democracies after the close of the Cold War. The collapse of the Soviet Union offered for many the tantalizing prospect of a new kind of international order. The fall of the Communist empire and the apparent embrace of democracy by Russia seemed to augur a new era of global convergence. Great power conflict and competition were a thing of the past. Geo-economics had replaced geopolitics. Nations that traded with one another would be bound together by their interdependence and less likely to fight one another. Increasingly commercial societies would be more liberal both at home and abroad. Their citizens would seek prosperity and comfort and abandon the atavistic passions, the struggles for honor and glory, and the tribal hatreds that had produced conflict throughout history. Ideological conflict was also

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Georgian soldiers in Gori take cover during a Russian air raid, August 9.

In the long run, rising prosperity may well produce political liberalism, but how long is the long run? It may be too long to have any strategic or geopolitical relevance. In the 1990s the liberal democracies expected that a wealthier Russia would be a more liberal Russia, at home and abroad. They were wrong.

a thing of the past. As Francis Fukuyama famously put it, "At the end of history, there are no serious ideological competitors left to liberal democracy." And if there were an autocracy or two lingering around at the end of history, this was no cause for concern. They, too, would eventually be transformed as their economies modernized.

Unfortunately, the core assumptions of the post-Cold War years have proved mistaken. The absence of great power competition, it turns out, was a brief aberration. Over the course of the 1990s, that competition reemerged as rising powers entered or reentered the field. First China, then India, set off on unprecedented bursts of economic growth, accompanied by incremental but substantial increases in military capacity, both conventional and nuclear. By the beginning of the 21st century, Japan had begun a slow economic recovery and was moving toward a more active international role both diplomatically and militarily. Then came Russia, rebounding from economic calamity to steady growth built on the export of its huge reserves of oil and natural gas.

Nor has the growth of the Chinese and Russian economies produced the political liberalization that was once thought inevitable. Growing national wealth and autocracy have proven compatible, after all. Autocrats learn and adjust. The autocracies of Russia and China have figured out how to permit open economic activity while suppressing political activity. They have seen that people making money will keep their noses out of politics, especially if they know their noses will be cut off. New wealth gives autocracies a greater ability to control information—to monopolize television stations and to keep a grip on Internet traffic, for instance—often with the assistance of foreign corporations eager to do business with them.

In the long run, rising prosperity may well produce political liberalism, but how long is the long run? It may be too long to have any strategic or geopolitical relevance. In the meantime, the new economic power of the autocracies has translated into real, usable geopolitical power on the world stage. In the 1990s the liberal democracies expected that a wealthier Russia would be a more liberal Russia, at home and abroad. But historically the spread of commerce and the acquisition of wealth by nations has not necessarily produced greater global harmony. Often it has only spurred greater global competition. The hope at the end of the Cold War was that nations would pursue

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A Russian soldier 'detains' a Georgian at a checkpoint in Gori, August 14.

GLEB GARANICH / REUTERS

economic integration as an alternative to geopolitical competition, that they would seek the "soft" power of commercial engagement and economic growth as an alternative to the "hard" power of military strength or geopolitical confrontation. But nations do not need to choose. There is another paradigm—call it "rich nation, strong army," the slogan of rising Meiji Japan at the end of the 19th century—in which nations seek economic integration and adaptation of Western institutions not in order to give up the geopolitical struggle but to wage it more successfully. The Chinese have their own phrase for this: "a prosperous country and a strong army."

The rise of these two great power autocracies is reshaping the international scene. Nationalism, and the nation itself, far from being weakened by globalization, has returned with a vengeance. There are the ethnic nationalisms that continue to bubble up in the Balkans and in the former republics of the Soviet Union. But more significant is the return of great power nationalism. Instead of an imagined new world order, there are new geopolitical fault lines where the ambitions of great powers overlap and conflict and where the seismic events of the future are most likely to erupt.

One of these fault lines runs along the western and southwestern frontiers of Russia. In Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, in the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and even in the Balkans, a contest for influence is under way between a resurgent Russia, on one side, and the European Union and the United States on the other. Instead of an anticipated zone of peace, western Eurasia has once again become a zone of competition, in which military power—pooh-poohed by postmodern Europeans—once again plays a role.

Unfortunately, Europe is ill-equipped to respond to a problem that it never anticipated having to face. The European Union is deeply divided about Russia, with the nations on the frontline fearful and seeking reassurance, while others like France and Germany seek accommodation with Moscow. The fact is, Europe never expected to face this kind of challenge at the end of history. This great 21st-century entity, the EU, now confronts 19th-century power, and Europe's postmodern tools of foreign policy were not designed to address more traditional geopolitical challenges. There is a real question as to whether Europe is institutionally or temperamentally able to play the kind of geopolitical games in Russia's near-abroad that Russia is willing to play.

There is some question about the United States, as well. At least some portion of American elite opinion has shifted from post-Cold War complacency, from the conviction that the world was naturally moving toward greater harmony, to despair and resignation and the belief that the United States and the world's democracies are power-

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less to meet the challenge of the rising great powers. Fukuyama and others counsel accommodation to Russian ambitions, on the grounds that there is now no choice. It is the post-American world. Having failed to imagine that the return of great power autocracies was possible, they now argue there is nothing to be done and the wise policy is to accommodate to this new global reality. Yet again, however, their imagination fails them. They do not see what accommodation of the great power autocracies may look like. Georgia provides a glimpse of that future.

The world may not be about to embark on a new ideological struggle of the kind that dominated the Cold War. But the new era, rather than being a time of "universal values," will be one of growing tensions and sometimes confrontation between the forces of liberal democracy and the forces of autocracy.

In fact, a global competition is under way. According to Russia's foreign minister, "For the first time in many years, a real competitive environment has emerged on the market of ideas" between different "value systems and development models." And the good news, from the Russian point of view, is that "the West is losing its monopoly on the globalization process." Today when Russians speak of a multipolar world, they are not only talking about the redistribution of power. It is also the competition of value systems and ideas that will provide "the foundation for a multipolar world order."

International order does not rest on ideas and institutions alone. It is shaped by configurations of power. The spread of democracy in the last two decades of the 20th century was not merely the unfolding of certain ineluctable processes of economic and political development. The global shift toward liberal democracy coincided with the historical shift in the balance of power toward those nations and peoples who favored the liberal democratic idea, a shift that began with the triumph of the democratic powers over fascism in World War II and that was followed by a second triumph of the democracies over communism in the Cold War. The liberal international order that emerged after these two victories reflected the new overwhelming global balance in favor of liberal forces. But those victories were not inevitable, and they need not be lasting. Today, the reemergence of the great autocratic powers, along with the reactionary forces of Islamic radicalism, has weakened that order and threatens to weaken it further in the years and decades to come.

Does the United States have the strength and ability to lead the democracies again in strengthening and advancing a liberal democratic international order? Despite all the recent noise about America's relative decline, the answer is most assuredly yes. If it is true, as some claim, that the United States over the past decade suffered from excessive confidence in its power to shape the world, the pendulum has now swung too far in the opposite direction.

A global competition is already under way. According to Russia's foreign minister, 'For the first time in many years, a real competitive environment has emerged on the market of ideas' between different 'value systems and development models.'

The apparent failure in Iraq convinced many people that the United States was weak, hated, and in a state of decline. Nor has anyone bothered to adjust that judgment now that the United States appears to be winning in Iraq. Yet by any of the usual measures of power, the United States is as strong today, even in relative terms, as it was in 2000. It remains the sole superpower, even as the other great powers get back on their feet. The military power of China and Russia has increased over the past decade, but American military power has increased more. America's share of the global economy has remained steady, 27 percent of global GDP in 2000 and 26 percent today. So where is the relative decline? So long as the United States remains at the center of the international economy, the predominant military power, and the leading apostle of the world's most popular political philosophy; so long as the American public continues to support American predominance, as it has consistently for six decades; and so long as potential challengers inspire more fear than sympathy among their neighbors, the structure of the international system should remain as the Chinese describe it: "one superpower and many great powers."

If American predominance is unlikely to fade any time soon, moreover, it is partly because much of the world does not really want it to. Despite the opinion polls, America's relations with both old and new allies have actually strengthened in recent years. Despite predictions that other powers would begin to join together in an effort to balance against the rogue superpower, especially after

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A Georgian man in front of a bombed-out apartment building in Gori, August 11

DAVID MDZINARISHVILI / REUTERS

the Iraq war, the trend has gone in the opposite direction. The rise of the great power autocracies has been gradually pushing the great power democracies back in the direction of the United States. Russia's invasion of Georgia will accelerate this trend, but it was already underway, even if masked by the international uproar over the Iraq war.

On balance, traditional allies of the United States in East Asia and in Europe, while their publics may be more anti-American than in the past, are nevertheless pursuing policies that reflect more concern about the powerful, autocratic states in their midst than about the United States. The most remarkable change has occurred in India, a former ally of Moscow which today sees good relations with the United States as essential to achieving its broader strategic and economic goals, among them balancing China's rising power. Japanese leaders came to a similar conclusion a decade ago. In Europe there is also an unmistakable trend toward closer strategic relations with the United States, a trend that will be accelerated by Russian actions. A few years ago, Gerhard Schröder and Jacques Chirac flirted with drawing closer to Russia as a way of counterbalancing American power. But lately France, Germany, and the rest of Europe have been moving in the other direction. This is not out of renewed affection for the United States. It is a response to changing international circumstances and to lessons learned from the past. The Chirac-Schröder attempt to make Europe a counterweight to American power failed in part because the European Union's newest members from Central and Eastern Europe fear a resurgent Russia and insist on close strategic ties with Washington. That was true even before Russia invaded Georgia. Now their feeling of dependence on the United States will grow dramatically.

What remains is for the United States to translate this growing concern into concerted action by the world's democracies. This won't be easy, given the strong tendencies, especially in Europe, to seek accommodation with autocratic Russia. But this is nothing new—even during the Cold War, France and Germany sometimes sought to stand somewhere between the United States and the Soviet Union. Over time, France and Germany will have no choice but to join the majority of EU members who once again worry about Moscow's intentions.

So what to do? Instead of figuring out how to accommodate the powerful new autocracies, the United States and the world's other democracies need to begin thinking about how they can protect their interests and advance their principles in a world in which these are once again powerfully challenged. The world's democracies need to show solidarity with one another, and they need to support those trying to pry open a democratic space where it has been closing.

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That includes in the great power autocracies themselves. It is easy to look at China and Russia today and believe they are impervious to outside influence. But one should not overlook their fragility and vulnerability. These autocratic regimes may be stronger than they were in the past in terms of wealth and global influence, but they still live in a predominantly liberal era. That means they face an unavoidable problem of legitimacy. Chinese leaders race forward with their economy in fear that any slowing will be their undoing. They fitfully stamp out even the tiniest hints of political opposition because they live in fear of repeating the Soviet collapse and their own near-death experience in 1989. They fear foreign support for any internal political opposition more than they fear foreign invasion. In Russia, Putin strains to obliterate his opponents, even though they appear weak, because he fears that any sign of life in the opposition could bring his regime down.

The world's democracies have an interest in keeping the hopes for democracy alive in Russia and China. The optimists in the early post-Cold War years were not wrong to believe that a liberalizing Russia and China would be better international partners. They were just wrong to believe that this evolution was inevitable. Today, excessive optimism has been replaced by excessive pessimism. Many Europeans insist that outside influences will have no effect on Russia. Yet, looking back on the Cold War, many of these same Europeans believe that the Helsinki Accords of the 1970s had a subtle but eventually profound impact on the evolution of the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc. Is Putin's Russia more impervious to such methods than Brezhnev's Soviet Union? Putin himself does not think so, or he wouldn't be so nervous about the democratic states on his borders. Nor do China's rulers, or they wouldn't spend billions policing Internet chat rooms and waging a campaign of repression against the Falun Gong.

Whether or not China and Russia are susceptible to outside influence over time, for the moment their growing power and, in the case of Russia, the willingness to use it, pose a serious challenge that needs to be met with the same level-headed determination as previous such challenges. If Moscow is now bent on restoring its hegemony over its near neighbors, the United States and its European allies must provide those neighbors with support and protection. If China continues to expand its military capabilities, the United States must reassure China's neighbors of its own commitment to Asian security.

The future is not determined. It is up for grabs. The international order in the coming decades will be shaped by those who have the power and the collective will to shape it. The great fallacy of our era has been the belief that a liberal and democratic international order would come about by the triumph of ideas alone or by the natural unfolding of human progress. Many believe the Cold War ended the way it did simply because the better worldview triumphed, as it had to, and that the international order that exists today is but the next stage in humanity's forward march from strife and aggression toward a peaceful and prosperous coexistence. They forget the many battles fought, both strategic and ideological, that produced that remarkable triumph.

The world's democracies have an interest in keeping the hopes for democracy alive in Russia and China. The optimists were not wrong to believe that a liberalizing Russia and China would be better international partners. They were just wrong to believe that this evolution was inevitable.

The illusion is just true enough to be dangerous. Of course there is strength in the liberal democratic idea and in the free market. But progress toward these ideals has never been inevitable. It is contingent on events and the actions of nations and peoples—battles won or lost, social movements successful or crushed, economic practices implemented or discarded.

After the Second World War, another moment in history when hopes for a new kind of international order were rampant, Hans Morgenthau warned idealists against imagining that at some point "the final curtain would fall and the game of power politics would no longer be played." The struggle continued then, and it continues today. Six decades ago American leaders believed the United States had the ability and responsibility to use its power to prevent a slide back to the circumstances that had produced two world wars and innumerable national calamities. Reinhold Niebuhr, who always warned against Americans' ambitions and excessive faith in their own power, also believed, with a faith and ambition of his own, that "the world problem cannot be solved if America does not accept its full share of responsibility in solving it." Today the United States shares that responsibility with the rest of the democratic world, which is infinitely stronger than it was when World War II ended. The only question is whether the democratic world will once again rise to the challenge. ♦

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Destination Malabo

A group of mercenaries' failed attempt to take over the worst place on earth.

By Mark Hemingway

What's the worst place in the world? If one were to judge strictly by media hype, Zimbabwe, Somalia, and Sudan would seem to be the prime contenders. Some pieces of terra firma, however, are so Godforsaken and blood-soaked that they are ignored by the media lest they be allowed to trouble the Western world's already guilt-ridden conscience. This is why you never read anything about Equatorial Guinea, a country of such Dantesque absurdity as to scarcely be believed.

Physically, Equatorial Guinea is an odd and remote country. Slightly smaller than Maryland, it is nestled firmly in the armpit of Africa's western coast between Gabon and Cameroon, and bordering the Bight of Biafra. But there are also five inhabited islands. The largest of these, known as Fernando Pó or Bioko, houses the capital, Malabo, and is located 150 miles from the mainland off the coast of Cameroon. Equatorial Guinea has the second smallest population on continental Africa.

It was a Spanish territory for 190 years, though Spain repeatedly tried to offload it on other nations for a meager price. Graham Greene, who did clandestine work for the British government in western Africa during World War II, simply called it "the little dreadful Spanish island." Spain was a callous colonial ruler, but it at least kept up the cocoa plantations and encouraged commerce. It was when the Spaniards left in 1968 that things really went south, and Equatorial Guinea came to be known as the "Dachau of Africa." One aid worker declared, "On a scale of one to ten, even an African scale, it's a zero." In Malabo in 1971, an American diplomat stabbed his gay lover and embassy colleague 10 times with a pair of scissors. His (unsuccessful) defense was that living in Equatorial Guinea drove him insane.

So what happened? Well, stop me if you've heard this one before, but in the latter part of the 20th century, a colonial power became indifferent to its African territory. Independence loomed. The colonial power propped up the local leader they perceived to be most friendly to their interests. Elections were held. The newly elected African leader immediately began consolidating power. Democracy was strangled in the crib, and a brutal dictator emerged.

Where Equatorial Guinea departs from the standard African narrative is in exactly how brutal and capricious its newly installed dictator proved to be. The son of a witch doctor, Macías Nguema began as a populist politician among the Fang, the country's largest ethnic group. His election in 1968 was hailed by Spain as "a peaceful, friendly, and constructive development." He promptly kicked off an 11-year reign of terror.

Nguema flattened the cocoa plantations, outlawed fishing in an island nation, and destroyed all the industry. He had 10 of his original 12 cabinet ministers killed, banned Western medicine, and let cholera run amok in regions whose political support he doubted. He declared that "intellectuals are the greatest problem facing Africa today" and then forbade use of the word "intellectual." He established links with the Soviet Union and kidnapped foreigners for ransom. He referred to himself as "God's Unique Miracle," shut down nearly all the country's schools and churches—in the overwhelmingly Christian country—and once, according to the *Financial Times*, "unskillfully hanged" 150 people in a soccer stadium "to the strains of Mary

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Hopkin singing 'Those Were the Days' over the loudspeaker system." A bit showy, you think? Perhaps, but it was Christmas. Reports indicate that Nguema was a keen practitioner of one of the local anthropological curiosities—cannibalism. This taste may explain his cherished skull collection.

By the time Nguema was deposed in 1979, a third of the country's population—around half-a-million at independence—had been killed and another third had fled the country. Macías Nguema was removed in a bloody coup by his nephew, Obiang Nguema. Obiang had served in his uncle's government and was complicit in many of his crimes. In power he has hardly shown himself averse to violence, torture, and corruption—there are allegations that he, too, is a cannibal and ate the liver of a political opponent in 1993. But, he has also shown himself to be concerned with the appearance of holding elections. Rigged elections, yes, but still elections. In May, the ruling party captured 99 of 100 seats in the country's assembly. The government issued a press release: DEMOCRACY AT ITS PEAK IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA.

This darkest place on the Dark Continent, though, has been threatening to become a player in world affairs. Large oil reserves were discovered off the coast in 1996. Since then, this land where civilization fears to tread has been the recipient of $10 billion in foreign investment, and currently produces about 400,000 barrels of oil per day. Still, for most of the country it's business, or the lack thereof, as usual. Per capita income is now second only to Luxembourg; a remarkable statistic considering Equatorial Guinea has the smallest proportion of GDP spent on health and education of any country in Africa. That's probably because the country's rulers are squirreling away all the oil money in foreign banks. In 2004, a money laundering investigation into Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C., called for $360 million of Equatorial Guinean funds to be frozen until their origin could be sorted out.

Mann's plan for overthrowing the government of Equatorial Guinea was cobbled together from Frederick Forsyth's 1974 novel, 'The Dogs of War,' a revered text among mercenaries.

(Above) Simon Mann during his four-day trial in Equatorial Guinea's capital, Malabo, in July 2008.

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Despite the obvious corruption, the United States now considers the brutal backwater to be of major strategic importance, given the turmoil in world oil markets and the fact that China is taking an active interest in the region. In 2006, two months after Equatorial Guinea signed a major oil contract with the China National Offshore Oil Company, Obiang Nguema made an official visit to Washington. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called Obiang a "good friend."

And if you thought the small country's history couldn't get any more tragicomic, Equatorial Guinea was recently host to one of the most bizarre trials in recent memory. At issue is what role the governments of the United States, Spain, South Africa, and the United Kingdom played in the failed attempt by a marauding band of British and South African mercenaries to overthrow Obiang's government.

Black Beach prison in Malabo is one of the country's few notable addresses. It was Macías Nguema's preferred execution spot and has housed two generations of political prisoners in near starvation conditions. Black Beach is currently playing host to the most illustrious prisoner in its history. He also happens to be guilty of the crimes he was accused of committing.

Simon Mann (1952–) does not have the typical mercenary's pedigree. His father was the captain of England's national cricket team and heir to the Watney Mann brewing fortune. Educated at Eton, Mann attended Sandhurst, took a commission in the Scots Guards, and eventually served in Britain's elite Special Air Service (SAS).

Mann followed up his military career with a series of failed business ventures and a brief return to active duty during the Gulf war. Soon after, he became one of the principals in a private military company, Executive Outcomes. Clients included Texaco and De Beers, but the company wasn't exactly discriminating. It was, however, effective. In the early 1990s, working on behalf of major oil companies and the Angolan government, Executive Outcomes reclaimed oil facilities seized by rebels in military operations of an unprecedented size for a private army.

In 1996, Mann created a subsidiary called Sandline and recruited a former lieutenant-colonel of the Scots Guards, Tim Spicer, to run it. While the point of the subsidiary was to distance itself from the shady reputation Executive Outcomes had acquired, Mann and Spicer set about doing their best to tarnish the new name. In 1997, Sandline received $36 million from the government of Papua New Guinea to end a revolt in Bougainville. News of the deal caused the army to revolt and forced the prime minister to resign. Spicer was arrested as soon as Sandline forces attempted to enter the country. His release was secured only after the British government intervened.

By the next year, Sandline was embroiled in a much bigger scandal, accused of violating a U.N. arms embargo in Sierra Leone on behalf of an Indian client himself accused of embezzling millions from a Thai bank. Still, Sandline operated in one form or another until 2004. That was the year Mann was arrested for masterminding an attempt to overthrow the government of Equatorial Guinea.

On March 7, 2004, Simon Mann and 67 South African mercenaries were arrested on board a Boeing 727 at an airport in Harare, Zimbabwe, en route to Equatorial Guinea. Mann was accused of trying to purchase a large shipment of weapons during their brief stopover in Zimbabwe. Already on board were hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of weapons and equipment, as well as $180,000 in cash.

The next day, a South African named Nick du Toit and 14 mercenaries were arrested as part of the advance team inside Equatorial Guinea. They were lying in wait, ready to seize the airport tower in Malabo and otherwise lay the groundwork for Mann's planeload of soldiers to take over the country.

While these events raised eyebrows internationally, what really caught the attention of the world's press came four months later when the South African police raided the home of one of Simon Mann's Cape Town neighbors—Mark Thatcher, son of the former British prime minister. (Bizarrely enough, Obiang's playboy son, Teodorin, also has a house in the same posh suburb, Constantia). Thatcher, who has amassed a sizable personal fortune in various businesses, has a checkered past involving accusations of loan sharking, Saudi bribes, and tax evasion.

Investigators had discovered a number of suspicious money transfers to Logo Logistics, a firm owned by Mann, just prior to the coup attempt. Investigators think that Thatcher contributed about $275,000 for the purpose of chartering a helicopter to be used in the coup. Thatcher maintained that he didn't know the funds were to be used for the coup attempt, but eventually struck a deal and paid a $500,000 fine to the South African government, which has strict laws curbing mercenary activity.

Ely Calil, a Lebanese-Nigerian financier—under investigation at the time by the French government for shady oil dealings in Nigeria—also allegedly helped fund the plot. Calil is friendly with an Equatorial Guinean priest named Severo Moto who is in exile in Spain. The plotters had planned to install him as the country's new ruler. In the 1990s, Moto had tried his own hand at overthrowing Obiang. He was arrested by Angolan authorities on a Russian fishing trawler full of arms and soldiers headed for his native country. After fleeing to Spain, he was convicted of high treason in Equatorial Guinea and

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sentenced in absentia to 101 years in prison.

And if Thatcher's involvement wasn't catnip enough for the British press, money transfers had been made to Logo Logistics by one J.H. Archer. Jeffrey Howard Archer, Baron Archer of Weston-super-Mare, is a disgraced British politician and hugely successful writer with many bestsellers to his credit as well as a stint in prison, having been convicted of perjury in 2001 in a case related to a libel suit against a newspaper for reporting his relationship with a prostitute. Archer is known to have been friends with Calil and Thatcher and has issued carefully worded denials about his involvement.

The failed coup had the potential to pay off handsomely given the oil revenues of Equatorial Guinea. But Mann's plan was ultimately undone by its scale and by the dubious character of those involved. From mercenaries' divey South African watering holes to the posh gentlemen's clubs of London, the plot was the worst kept secret on two continents. It appears that both the U.S. Defense Department and the British Foreign Office were aware of the coup in advance. And even considering that Simon Mann had spent most of his adult life obliterating the fine line between profitable military adventures and harebrained schemes, this was not a well-planned operation. A few months after Mann's arrest, one observer writing in the *New African* wrote that the coup "could not have been surpassed in absurdity if cobbled together to form the fabric of a novel written to satirise Graham Greene, John le Carre or Ian Fleming."

As it happens, Mann may have cobbled together his plan *from* the fabric of a novel—quite literally.

There were an astonishing 110 coups attempted in Africa in the 1960s, and the 1970s weren't much calmer. At the height of the Cold War, one African journalist quipped, 'Africa grew bananas and coups.'

(Above) Some of Mann's group of mercenaries being paraded outside Chikurubi maximum security prison in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 2004.

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Frederick Forsyth is best known for his first novel, *The Day of the Jackal*, published in 1971—a major bestseller that spawned two movies. This gritty tale about an assassination attempt on French president Charles de Gaulle was peppered with astonishingly accurate details about the criminal underworld and revolutionized the political thriller. A former foreign correspondent with an obvious thirst for adventure, Forsyth remains cagey about what he did next. It appears that he may have taken his profits from *The Day of the Jackal* and funded his own unsuccessful coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea in 1973.

That year, British intelligence caught wind of a man in Spain first trying to charter and then to commandeer a privately owned former British naval vessel named the *Albatross*. The man in question, Alexander Ramsay Gay, ordered the boat to Gibraltar where it was loaded with fuel and other provisions. Gay later told the ship's captain, a man named Allan, that he was to expect a large shipment of boxes from an arms dealer in Hamburg.

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From mercenaries' divey South African watering holes to posh gentlemen's clubs in London, the coup was the worst kept secret on two continents. The U.S. and British governments were both aware of it in advance.

Obiang Nguema (above) has been the ruler of Equatorial Guinea since overthrowing his uncle in a bloody coup in 1979. Mark Thatcher (below), son of Margaret, was one of the key backers of the failed coup.

The British alerted the Spanish government, which detained the *Albatross* in the Canary Islands. Under questioning, the ship's captain said Gay had threatened his family and that he had discovered maps of Fernando Pó in Gay's cabin. Gay was taken back to Britain for questioning. According to some accounts, he was released only after Frederick Forsyth intervened on his behalf.

Less than a year later, Forsyth published a novel called *The Dogs of War* to instant acclaim. It tells the story of a small band of foreign mercenaries who take over an African country in order to seize a mountain containing $10 billion in platinum. Though set in the fictional African republic of Zangaro, the plot aligns closely with the 1973 coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea, with the not insignificant difference that in the book the coup succeeds. But until recently, no one knew how close it was.

In 2005, Adam Roberts, an *Economist* reporter and author of *The Wonga Coup*—an excellent recounting of Mann's escapade—unearthed the original British intelligence report filed from Gibraltar warning of the 1973 coup. In the book, Forsyth had an *Albatross* with a captain named Allen. Neither detail was public. For years, Forsyth denied any direct knowledge of the plan, chalking up his uncannily accurate details to meticulous research. Confronted with the *Albatross* particulars in a 2006 interview, Forsyth admitted that he knew Gay and that he made payments to men carrying out the coup "for information." Still, he maintains he did not orchestrate it, telling Roberts, "I'm not sure if the authors of the plot listened to me or I listened to them."

The idea of a private coup was less absurd in 1974 than one might imagine. Attitudes and politics in Africa were much different than today. There were an astonishing 110 coups attempted on the continent in the 1960s, and the 1970s weren't much calmer. At the height of the Cold War, one African journalist quipped, "Africa grew bananas and coups." African coups didn't always grab headlines in Western newspapers, even when they were led by notorious mercenary figures like Mike Hoare or Bob Denard, who frequently had the blessing of Western governments.

Forsyth's intentions seem to have been largely altruistic as there was no oil money to be had at the time, and his alleged plan for ruling Equatorial Guinea after the coup was actually not implausible. Forsyth cut his teeth for the BBC covering the war in nearby Biafra, and he emerged sympathetic to the Biafrans. He wanted to free the country from the horrific Macías Nguema and install Biafran leader Odumegwu Ojukwu. At the time, Equatorial Guinea was still host to thousands of Biafrans who had worked the cocoa plantations and would likely have

THATCHER, OBED ZILWA; OBIANG, ASSOCIATED PRESS

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supported the new leader, who would have then provided a refuge for the beleaguered Biafrans.

Forsyth told Roberts he was shocked to realize Mann's plot "was almost the same, blow by blow, as my novel!"—and noted the similarities: the external financiers, funding through dummy companies, the lure of mineral wealth, the would-be leader in exile. It's difficult to overestimate what a revered text *The Dogs of War* is in the military underworld. Any mercenary of note in the last 35 years likely has a dog-eared copy of the book in his kit.

And Forsyth is not completely removed from the mercenary game—or from Simon Mann. Following Sandline's dissolution in 2004, Tim Spicer founded a new private military company, Aegis Defense Services. (It presently holds the largest private security contract in Iraq, nearly $300 million from the U.S. government.) Forsyth is one of a select few private investors in the company. Spicer has been questioned by the British Foreign Office about possible involvement in Mann's coup, though no details have emerged connecting him to his old business partner.

Mann was well aware of the risks involved in trying to overthrow Obiang's government. A document retrieved from the office of his home in South Africa after his arrest noted: "As it is potentially a very lucrative game, we should expect bad behavior; disloyalty; rampant individual greed; irrational behaviour (kids-in-toy-shop type); backstabbing; bumf—ing; and similar ungentlemanly activities."

There's no mention of hubris, however. As the plan progressed, it's obvious Mann grew impatient and became willing to take increasingly large risks, and this was the proximate cause of the plot's spectacular failure. Robert Young Pelton laid out the group's original plan in his book *Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror*, relying on the account of Crause Steyl, the former head of air operations for Executive Outcomes, who was piloting Mann's Boeing 727 at the time of his arrest.

The night of the coup, "rebels" were to seize an airstrip in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Two planes would fly the 67 mercenaries from South Africa to Zambia where they would wait for the signal that the airstrip in the Congo had been seized. A third plane chartered by Nick du Toit, who had been sent into Equatorial Guinea months in advance to set up what appeared to be a legitimate business enterprise, would fly from Malabo to Harare to pick up the weapons cache needed for the coup. A fourth plane—an Ilyushin 76, a massive four-engine cargo jet—was also to carry six luxury SUVs from South Africa. The planes would eventually rendezvous at the airfield in the Congo. The men and weapons would be loaded on to the Ilyushin, and they would fly to Malabo, where the helicopter gunship Thatcher allegedly helped pay for would be in place to be used as air support and for medical evacuations if needed.

The SUVs were to be presented as a gift to Obiang on behalf of du Toit's business. Once everything was in place and the Ilyushin on the ground in Malabo, Obiang would be lured to the airport to pick up his presents, where he and his security detail would be overpowered and held. The mercenaries would then hop in the SUVs and go about securing the military base and police stations on the island. A plane originating in the Canary Islands would fly in from Mali with Severo Moto on board a half an hour after they received the signal that the island was secure. After his arrival, Moto would take to the airwaves and announce what they hoped would be a peaceful transition of power. And 600 Spanish soldiers were to be waiting off the coast—the advance group of some 3,000 more—whom Moto would invite to the island to help restore the peace. (There's no evidence of Spain committing soldiers to the effort.)

It was a complicated plan. But the beauty of it was that it allowed for many things to go wrong without compromising the whole. The parts were discrete, such that if the soldiers didn't arrive on time or the arms shipment in Zimbabwe got fouled up or something went wrong with one of the planes, the mission could be aborted without threatening the overall plan. Too bad Mann didn't stick to the plan.

Mann's arrest in Harare in March 2004 actually occurred during the second attempt at the coup. In February, en route from Pretoria to Zambia, the plane carrying the mercenaries hit a bird, breaking off its nose wheel and stranding Mann's army for hire. By then, Nick du Toit had already arrived in Harare to pick up the arms. Instead, he had to put the shipment on hold.

Mann returned home and decided that the plan needed to be simplified. The SUVs would be ditched so that a smaller plane than the Ilyushin could be used. They hatched a plan to get Obiang to a private dinner with du Toit and subdue him there. The mercenaries and the arms shipment would be on the same plane, bypassing the staging area in the Congo.

In March, Mann never managed to pick up the arms in Harare. An airport worker wondered why every single one of the dozens of windows on the Boeing 727 was shuttered. A quick investigation revealed that the plane was full of soldiers, and everybody on board was arrested. The government of Zimbabwe sent a television crew into the plane to document the scene. Mann was hauled off to a Zimbabwean jail, but not before he sent a message to

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du Toit telling him to call the whole thing off. It would prove to be in vain as du Toit was eventually arrested. Mann did get a message to the plane with Moto in Mali, allowing them to escape.

If overthrowing the Equatorial Guinean government proved tricky, it would have been a piece of cake compared with actually running it. In July 2003, Greg Wales, Mann's accountant and business adviser, drafted contracts detailing how much the coup plotters would get paid by Moto. In total, Mann wanted at least $7 million, and a million dollars would go to each of three lieutenants. The 75 rank and file South African mercenaries would receive $25,000 each.

Wales laid their plans bare in what is known as the Bight of Benin Company document, dated January 2004. Much of Africa was colonized by private companies on behalf of their respective empires, and Wales modeled his business plan on the charters of old British trading companies and buccaneering firms. He outlined a plan for the new government that would keep Moto in check. The plotters determined that despite installing him as the country's leader, they must retain "general legal power to run, alter, or effect any economic planning, regulatory, or other issue that we see as essential," and that they must control "Army/Navy/Air Force Military Equipment Intelligence Palace Guard Other control functions: customs, airport and port security, maritime security, all of whom must be recruited and paid by us."

The document also shows those behind the coup wanted to be highly deferential to the interests of the United States. "The more we can help to keep the heat off U.S.G. [United States Government], the better they will like it, and probably the more they will actively help us in the many ways we need them to." The document also states that the United States "will be very upset at claims that it was behind it; such claims can be expected."

In November 2003, Wales was seen schmoozing Theresa Whelan, the U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for African affairs at the International Peace Operations Association's annual conference. It's not known whether or not Wales broached the topic of how well the United States might receive regime change in Equatorial Guinea, but it certainly adds weight to Mann's contention that the United States approved of the coup. Wales is, however, "prone to rambling lectures"—as Adam Roberts put it. Pelton notes that Wales has often drunkenly—and improbably—bragged of work he's done on behalf of the CIA. Even if Wales isn't credible, it's nonetheless interesting that an accountant was suddenly so interested in making Whelan's acquaintance.

Simon Mann remained in a prison in Zimbabwe until earlier this year, when he was quietly extradited to Equatorial Guinea. In late June, a gaunt and shackled Mann had a four-day trial in Malabo. He was sentenced to 34 years in prison—likely a life sentence for a 56-year-old Etonian in an African jail.

But things are actually looking up for Mann. He is said to lunch every day with Manuel Nguema Mba, Equatorial Guinea's minister of national security, who is also Obiang's uncle and one of the government's most notorious torturers. (The lunches are catered from a nearby hotel owned by Manuel.) A lawyer in the country told the London *Times* that Mann's trial was a "charade." "He will be pardoned within a year, two at the most." Many think Mann struck a deal with Obiang, in exchange for information about the plot and its backers. The *Times* further reported, "Diplomatic sources broadly concurred, though they thought Mann may have to serve three or four years."

So the question is now, what does Mann know? During his trial, "Mann implicated the governments of South Africa and former colonial power Spain, and implied Washington would also have looked favorably on a coup," according to Reuters. This all might be true. Johann Smith, the former commander of South African special forces, who alerted the United States and Britain to the plot, has said publicly that he had expected the two countries to warn the government of Equatorial Guinea. They did not, which suggests the Foreign Office and State Department might not have frowned on a regime change, no matter how cockamamie the attempt.

Mann appears to have become bitter in regards to his former conspirators, telling British television, "If someone wants to do me a favor, what they could do is put a pair of handcuffs on Calil, chuck him on a plane, and bring him to Malabo." He's also now asserting that Thatcher was directly involved in planning the coup, despite Thatcher's continued insistence otherwise. Mann could simply be pulling the wool over Obiang's eyes—probably not hard to do with the ruler of a country where witch burnings are still commonplace. But true or not, what Mann's telling Obiang could upset the delicate balance of Western interests in the nation, further driving it into the warm embrace of a China all too eager to ferret out access to every natural resource it can get its hands on.

As the full details of the coup continue to emerge, aspiring writers should pay close attention. There are no doubt a few good novels to be wrung out of the ongoing intrigue surrounding Simon Mann and His Adventures in the Worst Place on Earth. As Frederick Forsyth has already proved, you just can't make this stuff up. ♦

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Solzhenitsyn at Harvard, June 8, 1978

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Man of Courage

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 1918-2008 BY HARVEY MANSFIELD

Alexander Solzhenitsyn was a hero with the hero's virtue of courage. He displayed courage, he reflected on it. The display was for all to see, the reflection was deep, difficult, and reserved. Back to this in a moment.

But first: A hero deserves hero worship, something between action and reflection, and I begin with my own experience. I was witness to the great man's great speech at Harvard on June 8, 1978. It happened to be my older son's day of graduation and my 25th class reunion, and we were treated to the most, unhappily the only, memorable commencement speech in my nearly 60 years at Harvard.

The speech was given in a mist on its way to rain, yet the audience, on the edge of its seats, listened carefully, eager to find hope and hoping it would be something they already had. But Solzhenitsyn had not come to praise, no, not even to praise Harvard. There was something in his speech to displease everyone. Liberals heard liberalism being assailed and jumped to the conclusion that this was a conservative speech; but conservatives had to endure a criticism of capitalism and of the West that did not exempt them. The word "conservative" was used once to say that we in the West are too conservative. And in Solzhenitsyn's introductory remarks, Harvard had its motto *Veritas* thrown in its face by a guest speaker who had to reassure the audience as he began that he was a friend, not an adversary.

With me was my late wife, Delba Winthrop, also a hero worshipper, but one who wrote articles on Solzhenitsyn's thought. Later, she had the temerity to send one of them to the subject and was rewarded with a short, personal letter from him praising her for "giving much to think about," while of course keeping mum about the accuracy of her analysis. What I say now came from her.

The obituaries speak of Solzhenitsyn's influence on his time, our time; but one should look also for the permanent value in how he lived and what he said. The obvious point of attention is his courage.

We, today, are in the habit of distinguishing two kinds of courage: The physical courage of facing and controlling the fear of bodily pains, and the moral courage of standing up against conventional opinion. Moral courage is often said to be more difficult because it requires greater intellect, but it is harder to discern because it is frequently confused with zealous, strongly expressed partisanship by intellectuals. Physical courage is easier to appreciate because it is more independent of circumstances; it is a virtue in itself, even when exercised for a dubious end. But it seems less valuable because it is not rare.

Solzhenitsyn had both kinds. He was, above all, a courageous man, defying his enemies to do their worst, which they did. He survived intimidation, arrest, imprisonment, starvation, forced labor, several types of torture—and, let us not forget, cancer. Everyone respects this in

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him. But he also thought about courage, and made it the theme of his Harvard speech by denouncing the decline of courage in the West. This was not so well received.

Some believed that, if he was not a crackpot, he was as wrong as one; others that he should have been deterred by gratitude from speaking the sort of truth that he himself called "bitter" on a happy occasion such as a commencement. But at this distance from the event, to learn something useful, and to do him honor at his death, it makes sense to try to see what he was saying about courage.

Solzhenitsyn's argument is that the two kinds of courage are not separate but connected. A decline in the ability to control fear of pain leads to a decline in capability for self-defense and to "the dangerous tendency to form a herd," thus becoming subject to fashion. If we all think alike, we will all be safe without having to defend ourselves. This part of the Harvard speech appears to anticipate what we call political correctness.

In the Gulag, 1946

Where did this decline begin? He could have said the late sixties, and he was addressing Harvard professors, many of whom had recently shown great cowardice in allowing their university to be disrupted, even taken over, by students protesting against the Vietnam war. He mentions opposition to that war, but subordinates it to a mistake "at the root" of Western thinking, the idea of modernity that was first born in the Renaissance and best expressed in the Enlightenment.

Solzhenitsyn paints with rough strokes, but clearly enough. The Western mistake was to turn our backs on the spiritual—devotion to which had grown to excess and come to a natural end in the Middle Ages—and to embrace materialism with an opposite unwarranted zeal. Under this idea there was no intrinsic evil and no higher task than to attain happiness on earth. Happiness is to be understood as physical well-being and the accumulation of material goods, and anything beyond these was left outside the attention of the state and society to the option of the individual, as if there were nothing higher than matter in human life.

For a time, in the American democracy at its birth, human rights were still considered to be the gift of God, so that freedom was given to the individual conditionally, under the assumption of a religious responsibility in him. But that assumption was weakened as materialism became increasingly radical, taking the form of a scientific socialism and, finally, communism. The more radical materialism is more convincing because it is more consistent, and "the situation becomes increasingly dramatic" to the point where it is clear that the split in the world between democracy in the West and communism in the East is less terrible than the similarity of the materialist diseases that plagues the two sides.

Capitalism and communism are the two hostile parts of modernity, and the world is approaching a new major turn in history equal in importance to the founding of modernity in the Renaissance. The new age will have to revalue the spiritual without returning to the Middle Ages.

Quite a vision! Too much for Harvard to accept and too much to judge here. But what is the connection to courage? Courage in the raw, physical sense is the noble ability to control one's fear and terror of bodily pains. When Aristotle said that the noblest courage is to confront death in battle, he implied that society depends on this individual virtue. Courage as a virtue practiced for its own sake is not undertaken to defend society, but society needs it and must cultivate and reward it. Now, modern materialism is an attempt to avoid depending on virtue generally and, especially, on courage.

Modern materialism rests on self-preservation or the right to life, in which survival is paramount. But one can never be courageous with such an attitude, for courage requires willingness to sacrifice one's life for something higher, for a noble life. That is why modern democracies have such difficulty defending themselves. They require a virtue that is not explained or justified in their principle. The Declaration of Independence begins by setting forth rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and stating that all men are created equal. But it ends with a vow in which the signers mutually pledge their sacred honor to one another.

Where was "sacred honor" in the first paragraph of this wonderful document? Honor is the inspiration of courage, and the sacred is immaterial and comes from above. It seems that materialism somewhat shamefacedly rests on the immaterial for its self-defense. Courage is the suppressed virtue of modernity, honored only in the breach of its principle.

We see this problem in America today in the gratitude we express to our military. They risk their lives in harm's way, we like to say. Yes, unlike us who face death by traffic accident and "natural causes." The military are the courage element in our community, at odds with the appetite element, but necessary to it. They do more than "serve"; they are our guardians. It sounds like Plato's Republic, except that, with us, appetite is the sovereign element. Our philosophers are not kings, but they are called intellectuals and they serve sovereign appetites.

In perhaps the most interesting and original of Solzhenitsyn's insights in the Harvard speech, he notes the importance that Western democracies confer on legalism. Legalism is our substitute for virtue: You don't have to distinguish good from evil and do good while avoiding evil; all you have to do is obey the law. This is a minimal requirement exacting only a form of behavior, not an attitude of soul. You do not even have to believe that you have a soul or are capable of "voluntary, inspired self-restraint."

Only this last quality, Solzhenitsyn says, can lift the world above materialism. It is voluntary because it must freely come from you, and yet be inspired by something higher than your bodily self. His formulation seems to restate courage in the terms of moderation, or

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to combine the virtues of courage and moderation. Courage is the restraint of one's fear for the sake of what is noble, hence also the restraint of one's appetite for material goods that diverts the soul from courage. With restraint of appetite comes abandonment of zeal for the principle of happiness in this world, the principle of materialism. For modern materialism has used its own inspiration—from below or perverted from above—to drive vicious actions that have the feel of noble sacrifice to the doer if not the recipient.

Materialism is a doctrine that weakens humanity and thus deprives itself of strong defenders. Yet America does have defenders even though it does not understand them. Our philosophy is unworthy of our courage and cannot do it justice. Still, it cannot do away with courage. This means that our philosophers are free riders or parasites on our military.

Courage is unphilosophic by itself, insofar as it is the unquestioning defense of whatever is one's own. But it needs and wants a metaphysics to combat materialism and to call attention to the importance of human courage. This is the connection between physical and moral courage shown in the life and thought of Solzhenitsyn. Courage likes the taste of bitter truth, which to it is bittersweet. Courage enjoys "the situation [that] becomes increasingly dramatic," the big picture shown to us in the Harvard speech that has us approaching "a major turn in history." In that picture, the Communist East is weak but the West is weaker. Things did not turn out that way, and the West prevailed despite the weakness that Solzhenitsyn correctly pointed out. Courage is in our nature if only we look for it, but the next time it may not be ready to hand if we continue trying to suppress it.

I forgot to mention that courage in Greek is also the word for manliness. Which prompts me to assert that Alexander Solzhenitsyn was a manly man if ever there was one. For us, he was Homer to his own Achilles, the best statement and explanation of himself. And let me suggest to those with time to read *The First Circle* that he was as Greek as he was Russian. ♦

One Hit Wonder

Arthur Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes, and that's enough. **BY BARTON SWAIM**

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Basil Rathbone in The Hound of the Baskervilles *(1939)*

From almost the moment of his first appearance, in 1887, Sherlock Holmes overshadowed his creator. People would write to the author asking advice on solving mysteries, as though he were a detective rather than a writer. Indeed, some admirers—as we learn from Andrew Lycett's superb new biography—wrote directly to the nonexistent Holmes. The degree to which the detective became more famous than his creator is nicely symbolized by the fact that, while there are no statues of Arthur Conan Doyle in Edinburgh, the city of his birth, there is an enormous one of Sherlock Holmes.

The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes
The Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
by Andrew Lycett
Free Press, 576 pp., $30

Arthur Conan Doyle
A Life in Letters
Edited by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower, and Charles Foley
Penguin, 720 pp., $37.95

Conan Doyle's literary productivity matched, or excelled, his famously prolific contemporaries. He wrote historical novels, science fiction, thrillers, works on spiritualism, histories and pamphlets on the Boer War and World War I, plays, collections of poems, and innumerable articles and short stories. Yet his reputation rests exclusively on the four novels and 56 stories of the Holmes *oeuvre*. Apart from those, not a single one of Conan Doyle's works is now read by anybody but academics and specialists.

The two works under review here represent literary scholarship of a high order: clearly and engagingly written, scrupulously accurate, extremely well researched. Yet neither attempts more than a cursory answer to the central question (as it seems to me) of Arthur Conan Doyle's literary

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career: Why is he remembered for Holmes—and for literally nothing else?

His mother, Mary Doyle, was the preeminent force in Conan Doyle's life. He seems to have written her about once a week from the time he left for preparatory school, aged nine, until her death a half-century later. She was, as he recalled in his fictional autobiography *The Stark Munro Letters* (1895), "the quaintest mixture of the housewife and the woman of letters." He could remember her stirring porridge "with the porridge stick in one hand and the other holding her *Revue des deux mondes* within two inches of her dear nose."

It was at the University of Edinburgh's medical school that he encountered Professor Joseph Bell, who taught his students the value of noticing the seemingly irrelevant details of their patients' conditions. Bell would serve as the model for Holmes, whose dazzling powers of deduction made him, as his colleague Dr. Watson put it, "the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen."

By the time Conan Doyle set up his medical practice in 1885, in Portsmouth, he had spent a year of schooling in Austria, six months on a whaler as a ship's doctor, and another four months as a surgeon on a steamer bound for West Africa. When his medical practice failed to bring in sufficient funds, he found he could turn his travels to profit by writing swashbuckling adventure stories. The first of these, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), the second half of which is set among Mormons in America, earned Conan Doyle a meager £25. (He had sold the copyright, a mistake he wouldn't make again.) His second book, *Micah Clarke* (1888), a historical novel set during the 1685 Monmouth Rebellion, did slightly better.

The most profitable idea of his life came to him in September 1889: "I shall give Sherlock Holmes of *A Study in Scarlet* something else to unravel," he wrote to Joseph Stoddart of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. "I notice that everyone who has read the book wants to know more of that young man." The result was *The Sign of Four* (1890). Urged by his publishers to produce more Holmes material, he began writing short stories in which Holmes and Watson remained the lead characters—a literary device original with Conan Doyle. Soon he found he could name his own price, so addicted had the public become to this famous detective's adventures.

Arthur Conan Doyle, 1893

HERBERT ROSE BARRAUD

At some point in 1892 he realized he could give up his medical practice and support his family—by this time a wife and two children—on writing alone. "I should at last be my own master," he later recalled. "No longer would I have to conform to professional dress or try to please any one else." He wasn't his own master, however: Sherlock Holmes was, as over time he would ruefully acknowledge. Conan Doyle's other literary works would earn him money, but only Holmes kept him wealthy.

As early as 1891 he was looking forward to killing the great detective. "He takes me from better things," he wrote to his mother. By "better things" he meant historical fiction—the readable but ultimately second-rate novels he would produce over the next decade. Despite his mother's entreaties, he had Holmes plunge to his death with Professor Moriarty in "The Final Problem," the last installment of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894). The Holmes stories weren't the first detective stories ever written, but they were the best, then or since: stylish, highly intelligent, utterly riveting.

They were also easy for their author to write, and profitable. In 1902 he was at it again with *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and the following year he began producing the stories that would make up *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1904). The detective, it seemed, hadn't been killed in the Reichenbach Falls after all.

Like all great writers of the 19th century, Conan Doyle was restless. He went on lecture tours of the United States and Australia. He popularized snow skiing and, for a time, fancied himself an amateur paleontologist. He was a devoted cricketer and early motorcar enthusiast. He volunteered as a doctor during the Boer War, and when World War I began, he set up a civil defense force in Sussex and became a nuisance to the War Office. In 1906 he led a campaign to clear the name of George Edalji, an Englishman of Indian descent wrongly accused of mutilating animals.

As a writer, however, he wasn't just restless; he was aimless. As Lycett puts it, "He could not commit himself exclusively to any style of writing." Again and again we find him spending time and energy on (to put it kindly) unpromising literary projects. In 1896, for example, apparently out of a desire to memorialize his friend James Payn, he wrote a play based on Payn's novel *Halves*; the plot involved two brothers who go their separate ways but first agree to meet after 21 years and share their fortunes. In 1893 he collaborated with J.M. Barrie on the libretto to a comic opera, *Jane Annie; or, the Good Conduct Prize*. George Bernard Shaw called it "the most unblushing piece of tomfoolery that two respectable citizens could

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conceivably indulge in public." During World War I, Conan Doyle managed to secure a commission to write an official history of the conflict. It was a failure. "He has worked hard," concluded a reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement*, "but it is not his métier to write military history."

Similarly detrimental to Conan Doyle's literary output—or so his admirers have either argued or assumed over the years—is his interest in spiritualism. His Roman Catholicism had died away while he was a student; in 1887, at 28, he attended a séance in which the medium said about him, "This gentleman is a healer. Tell him not to read Leigh Hunt's book." Conan Doyle was shocked: Apparently he had been intending to read Hunt's *Comic Dramatists of the Restoration* but hadn't mentioned this to anyone.

His spiritualist interests came and went over the next two decades, but after the death of his son Kingsley and his brother Innes in World War I, he became heavily involved in "automatic writing" and the like. (It is interesting to note that the death of his first wife Louise, in 1906, hadn't spurred any desire to make contact with the dead.) His second wife, Jean, joined her husband's spiritualist activities, and soon they were making contact with Kingsley and Innes and following the advice of a spirit guide named Pheneas—the subject of one of his last books, *Pheneas Speaks: Direct Spirit Communications in the Family Circle* (1927).

Yet neither his spiritualist zeal nor his aimlessness as a writer explains why he never achieved enduring literary success with anything but Holmes. To put it simply, Conan Doyle wrote fiction as though he were afraid somebody might miss the point. His novels are always well-crafted and often gripping, but he explains too much, too often. Every adumbration and allusion must be clarified, every irony made explicit.

Take, for instance, *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (1898), one of his more successful non-Holmes novels, written after the Conan Doyles had taken a trip down the Nile. It's the story of a group of Western tourists kidnapped by a band of Muslim zealots—a relentlessly fast-paced adventure that makes serious points about Britain's unenviable role in the Middle East. But *The Tragedy of the Korosko* might have been an excellent novel if it weren't for passages like this one. The tourists have just been abducted in the desert west of the Nile, and one of them, Headingly, has been murdered:

> What a chasm gaped between their old life and their new! And yet how short was the time and space which divided them! Less than an hour ago they had stood upon the summit of that rock, and had laughed and chattered, or grumbled at the heat and flies, becoming peevish at small discomforts. Headingly had been hypercritical over the tints of Nature. They could not forget his own tint as he lay with his cheek upon the black stone. Sadie had chattered about tailor-made dresses and Parisian chiffons. Now she was clinging, half-crazy, to the pommel of a wooden saddle, with suicide rising as a red star of hope in her mind. Humanity, reason, argument—all were gone, and there remained the brutal humiliation of force.

It's almost as if the Holmes stories were written by somebody else. And in fact, they were—by Dr. John Watson. Watson, of course, has no opportunity to discourse eloquently on the nature of the situation unfolding before him for the excellent reason that he didn't understand it. Watson is a dry man with the medical doctor's habit of recording only the empirically observable facts. He is always a step or two behind Holmes, whose reluctance to vent his suspicions ensures that Watson remains more or less in the dark until the climactic moment when the truth is known to all.

Whatever Conan Doyle's strengths or weaknesses as a writer of fiction, he understood one essential thing: "The final court of appeal," he observed in an 1890 essay on Robert Louis Stevenson, "must always, in the long run, be public opinion." The Holmes stories pleased Conan Doyle's readers, and he had the good sense not to experiment with them. "I do not wish to be ungrateful to Holmes," he once wrote, "who has been a good friend to me in many ways. If I have sometimes been inclined to be weary of him, it is because his character admits of no light or shade. He is a calculating machine, and anything you add to that simply weakens the effect. . . . I would say a word for Watson also, who in the course of seven volumes never knows one gleam of humour or makes a single joke."

What saved the Holmes stories from the frequently cloying and preachy narrative style of Conan Doyle's other fiction was a simple business calculation not to alter a successful formula. And the essential characteristic of that formula is that Dr. Watson, plain, humorless Watson, is the narrator. Dr. Watson is certainly dull by comparison with Holmes, but his dullness is precisely what raises these stories to the level of high art. His lucid style, together with his inability (as it seems) to understand exactly what's happening, gives the stories that character of understated intelligence that is unique in English literature.

Here is a passage from "The Red-Headed League."

> Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow. He wore rather baggy gray shepherd's check trousers, a not over-clean black frock-coat, unbuttoned in the front, and a drab waistcoat with a heavy brassy Albert chain, and a square pierced bit of metal dangling down as an ornament. A frayed top-hat and a faded brown overcoat with a wrinkled velvet collar lay upon a chair beside him. Altogether, look as I would, there was nothing remarkable about the man save his blazing red head, and the expression of extreme chagrin and discontent upon his features.
>
> Sherlock Holmes's quick eye took in my occupation, and he shook his head with a smile as he noticed my questioning glances. "Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else."

If only John Watson had written the rest of Conan Doyle's books. ♦

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Machine Politics

Will the new technologies make a difference in November? **BY FRED BARNES**

You've heard this before. A political earthquake is coming—and soon. Young people in their late teens and early 20s are ready to vote like never before. They're a new and different generation, inclined to vote Democratic in large enough numbers to precipitate a political realignment that could make Democrats the majority party for years and years to come.

Indeed, this could happen. But Republicans shouldn't panic yet. Political projections like this have a history. In 1972, with 18-to-21-year-olds permitted to vote for president for the first time, George McGovern thought a tidal wave of young people would elect him president over Richard Nixon. McGovern lost by 23.2 percentage points. In 1992 Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. declared that Bill Clinton's election had touched off a new era of Democratic rule. Two years later, Republicans won both houses of Congress and numerous governorships and state legislatures in a historic landslide.

So there's reason enough to be skeptical of a realignment led by young folks (or anyone else), but not dismissive. The millennial generation, consisting of those born since 1982, is the largest such cohort in history, bigger than the Baby Boomers (born from 1946 to 1964) and not as conservative as Generation X (1964 to 1982). And millennials, in their initial surges to the polls, voted slightly Democratic in 2004 and overwhelmingly (60 percent) in 2006.

In *Millennial Makeover*, Morley Winograd and Michael Hais argue that this is just the beginning.

> America is about to experience another electoral upheaval, or realignment, just as it has throughout its history. . . . If Democrats can maintain this initial generational allegiance during the next two presidential elections, they should gain a decisive electoral edge for decades to come.

Millennial Makeover
MySpace, YouTube & the Future of American Politics
by Morley Winograd & Michael D. Hais
Rutgers, 336 pp., $24.95

Unconventional Wisdom
Facts and Myths About American Voters
by Karen M. Kaufmann, John R. Petrocik, and Daron R. Shaw
Oxford, 272 pp., $21.95

Perhaps they will, but Winograd and Hais aren't unbiased observers. Both are California Democrats with extensive political experience, and they indulge at times in Democratic spin. But they have a case, based partly on current political circumstances in which Republicans are retreating and even more on the nature of the new generation: "What does seem clear," they write, "is that the Democrats' approach to political and social issues appears more compatible with Millennial attitudes."

At least for now, I'd add.

How so? Winograd and Hais adopt the generational theory of history invented by William Strauss and Neil Howe that is too complicated to go into here. Suffice it to say, the millennials (*aka* Generation Y) fit the theory perfectly as civic-minded young people who are socially tolerant, optimistic, academically accomplished, supportive of activist government, and surprisingly partisan. Their time has come and, as luck would have it, right in line with the Strauss-Howe theory.

What's particularly important is their technological savvy. "The political world is about to be shaken to its core by the arrival of these new capabilities for reaching voters, especially the generation that uses them every moment of every day," Winograd and Hais insist. We're talking here about the Internet, YouTube, and iPods, plus the online social networks MySpace and Facebook. For millennials, these are the preferred channels for news and information and for communicating with friends.

Democrats are far ahead of Republicans in using these tools, both to connect with voters and raise money. This has ominous implications. Republicans once led in fundraising through direct mail to millions of small donors and in winning elections with massive TV advertising. But these are less effective today. In 1965 a party could reach 80 percent of 18-to-49-year-olds with three 60-second, prime-time television commercials. Now it would take 117 of these TV spots to achieve 80 percent coverage. The Internet is not only an easier way to contact young people, it's cheaper.

"History suggests," according to Winograd and Hais, "that those who find ways to integrate the new technology with existing tactics to produce multi-faceted campaigns that reach all voters will be especially successful in future elections." Barack Obama's presidential campaign is the reigning example.

All of this sounds fine until Winograd and Hais get to the shaky foundation on which their realignment scenario rests: "Once individuals take on a party identification," they write, "they don't often change it and, as a result, a rising new generation spearheads major shifts in party identification and the political realignment that flows from it." But the truth is that Democrats don't yet own the millennial generation, and may never.

The authors of *Unconventional Wisdom*, three political science professors who specialize in elections, certainly aren't convinced, nor am I. "We cannot be sure that they will maintain

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this lopsided support for the Democrats," they write, "but certainly they start at a point close to the New Deal and Vietnam era voters."

That young voters often drift to the right as they get older is a widely acknowledged phenomenon. The Vietnam generation, now 46 to 65 years old, gave Democrats a 24-point advantage in the 1960s, but by 2004 the lead had shrunk to 8 points. Young voters in the Reagan era were slightly Democratic (5 points) in the 1980s, but leaned Republican (6 points) in the George W. Bush era.

I suspect a critical moment for millennials will come, possibly as early as 2010, when they face a political situation they've never experienced as voters. So far, their voting habits have been shaped by an unpopular Republican president, a scandal-ridden Republican Congress, and an Iraq war without victory in sight (until recently). No wonder they're Democrats. The test will come when they're confronted with a failed Democratic president or a reviled Democratic Congress, or both at once. My guess is that they'll begin to abandon the Democrats in droves, as they did during the White House years of Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

In general, *Unconventional Wisdom* takes the opposite tack from *Millennial Makeover*. The rise of millennials is the hot new story in politics, touted by the media and enthusiastically embraced by Democrats. Kaufmann, Petrocik, and Shaw devote themselves to debunking trendy political ideas spouted by the media and commentators. They describe the clash as "political scientists versus political analysts," and it's no surprise who wins. And they should win, since the evidence is on their side.

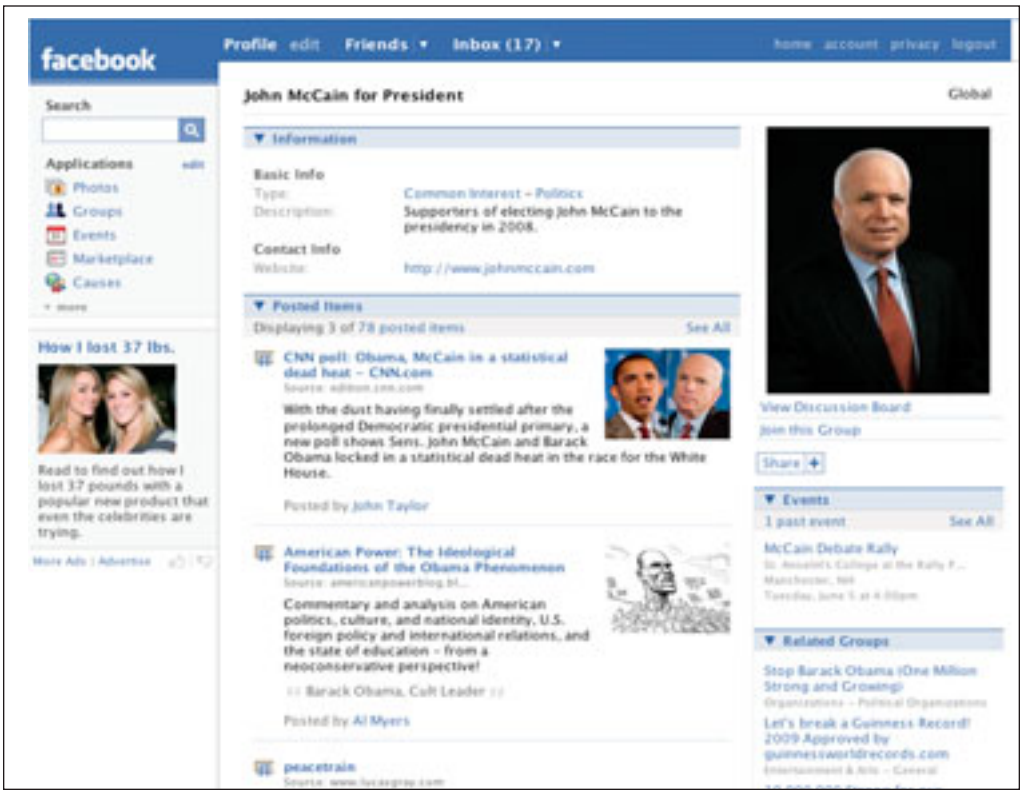
They make an especially compelling case against "the notion that elections are generally won by good campaign strategies and that voters are perennially up for grabs." This "makes for exciting journalism and television commentary," but political scientists know otherwise. In the real life of elections, "a predisposition to favor one of the parties . . . remains a dominant influence on the political behavior of Americans." In short, parties have, by far, the greatest impact on the outcome of elections. No other factor comes close.

Another myth is that America is politically polarized. Political elites and activists are polarized, but rank-and-file voters are not. Nor do swing voters come from definable demographic groups like soccer moms or office park dads. They happen to be voters who are "relatively less interested, less engaged, and less informed about politics [and] are spread out across social groups."

One of the hardy perennials of politics is that undecided voters break decisively for challengers over incumbents. Not empirically true, the authors point out. And the modern gender gap wasn't caused by women leaving the Republican party. Rather, it's "a direct result of white men moving from the Democrats to the Republicans." As for the notion that a big voter turnout favors Democrats, that's true only if the electoral mood is going their way. Usually turnout is "very nonpartisan." Also, what matters most about campaigns is not a candidate's strategy or the ability to attract undecideds: "It is more common to win an election by disproportionately activating and mobilizing your supporters than by persuading undecided voters," write Kaufmann, Petrocik, and Shaw.

We're flooded this year with political books, including at least five instructing conservatives and Republicans on how to rethink their ideas and policies. But if you'd rather concentrate on electoral politics, *Millennial Makeover* and *Unconventional Wisdom* should satisfy. One predicts the future, the other deconstructs the conventional wisdom of politics.

What more could you ask for? ♦



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Guarding the Baghdad Museum, 2003

National Treasures

Must the artifacts of culture be the property of states?

BY MARY KATHERINE ASCIK

A recent item in the *New York Times* highlighted the Louvre's purchase of a brooch belonging to Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III. The jewel, which was created for the empress in 1855 by a Parisian jeweler named François Kramer, had been sold at auction with the rest of the French crown jewels in 1887 and purchased by Caroline Astor of New York. The brooch remained in her family until the Louvre acquired it in a private sale this year.

According to the *Times*, the Louvre and the Friends of the Louvre wished to acquire the brooch because they "decided the jewel belonged in France." The Louvre's attitude illustrates what James Cuno says, in *Who Owns Antiquity?*, is the controlling idea behind the current laws and agreements protecting antiquities: Antiquities belong to the nation-state within whose borders they are found, and items which have migrated outside those borders should be returned to their "proper" owners.

Who Owns Antiquity?
Museums and the Battle over Our Ancient Heritage
by James Cuno
Princeton, 256 pp., $24.95

According to Cuno, during the past 50 years, national laws and international agreements on cultural property have moved from a more general concern with protecting such property to a concern with ensuring that nation-states retain cultural artifacts found within the borders of their territory, or reacquire them if they have been removed from the country.

The ostensible purpose of these laws is to protect cultural artifacts and prevent looting and illegal trafficking. But in fact, writes Cuno, such laws, "while said to be aimed at protecting archaeological sites and the scientific knowledge they contain . . . are really intended to keep cultural heritage within the borders of the nation within which such property is found." And the point of this "retentionism" is nationalist: By tracing a direct line between the current nation-state and peoples who lived in the same territory hundreds, or even thousands, of years before, modern governments legitimize their existence and right to govern. States argue—falsely, in Cuno's view—that antiquities "belong to the modern nation as . . . the origins of its modern culture and identity."

In fact, modern states do not have their origins in antiquity, and antiquities cannot and do not belong to particular nations. Antiquities represent the world's "common ancient heritage" and, as such, belong to all of us: "Antiquities are the cultural property of all humankind—of *people*, not *peoples*—evidence of the world's ancient past and not that of a particular modern nation," Cuno writes. "They comprise antiquity, and antiquity knows no borders."

In addition to failing to prevent looting—which is increasing, despite ever-tighter restrictions on acquiring cultural property—nationalist cultural property laws are restricting the world's access to our common heritage. Once archaeologists from places like Great Britain, Germany, and the United States would undertake digs in countries like Egypt and Iraq, with the understanding that any finds would be shared between the host country and the archaeologists. Collections at Harvard, Yale, and the British Museum, among others, were built under this system, known as *partage*, which also resulted in the expansion of local museums in Iraq and Egypt.

Today, by contrast, the governments of host countries frequently refuse to part even with minor archaeological finds. Museums are forced to adhere to an increasing number of laws and regulations in acquiring antiquities, and with the emphasis on keeping artifacts in the country of origin, it is more difficult to legally acquire antiquities from other countries. The result: decreased access to our common heritage.

Ultimately, however, Cuno argues that the problem with today's nation-

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MARCO DI LAURO / GETTY IMAGES

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alist/retentionist cultural property laws is that they promote sectarian division. They "nationalize and fail to protect our ancient heritage, and they conspire against a greater understanding and appreciation of the world's many, diverse cultures. . . . They promote a sectarian view of culture and encourage the politics of identity at a time when nationalism and sectarian violence are resurgent around the world." In fact, as Cuno suggests, by promoting the politics of identity, retentionist cultural property laws, and the nationalism that underlies them, lead directly to discrimination and violence against other cultures or ethnic groups.

The solution is to "all work together to counter the nationalist basis of national laws and international conventions and agreements and promote a principle of shared stewardship of our common heritage." Cuno calls for a return to *partage*, with its generous sharing of antiquities between countries, and a broader dispersal of antiquities around the world.

Of special importance to Cuno is the promotion of the encyclopedic museum. "Encyclopedic museums" feature collections which "comprise representative examples of the world's artistic legacy" and "direct attention to distant cultures, asking visitors to respect the values of others and seek connections between cultures." For Cuno, president and director of the Art Institute of Chicago, the encyclopedic museum is a key force "for understanding, tolerance, and the dissipation of ignorance and superstition, where the artifacts of one time and one culture can be seen next to those of other times and other cultures without prejudice."

He argues convincingly that current cultural property laws are too retentionist, and cites the example of Italy, which in 2001 asked the United States to impose import restrictions on a vast range of artifacts—"virtually every kind of object produced in or imported to the land we now call Italy over 1,200 years of recorded human history"—despite the fact that, "by any measure, Italy's museums are engorged with antiquities and their storerooms have long been filled to capacity with antiquities waiting to be catalogued, studied, and published."

No one, Italian or otherwise, profits much from antiquities gathering dust in storerooms in Italian museums. Cuno contrasts Italy's laws with those of Japan, which "ranks its cultural property by quality and rarity and allows the export of much of it. . . . [A]s of 2004, the nation's Agency for Cultural Affairs had ranked nearly 20,000 cultural properties and designated only some 1,000 as National Treasures, which in most cases are ineligible for export, leaving 95 percent of the cultural properties available for export."

Restoring the Elgin Marbles after World War II

AFP / NEWSCOM

It's difficult to disagree with the idea that people benefit when antiquities of other countries can be seen in museums around the world. And the virtues of *partage* also seem clear. As Cuno points out, the collections at the great museums of the world could not have been put together under our current system of cultural property laws, and the millions of people who have marveled at these collections would be poorer for not having seen them. Nor did *partage* benefit only the universities who employed archaeologists. Archaeologists working under *partage* invariably built up the collections of museums in the countries in which they were excavating, increasing local people's access to the antiquities found on their land.

Of course, whether we could actually return to anything like *partage*, as Cuno favors, seems unlikely. Cuno would like to see archaeologists refuse to participate in excavations unless all parties agreed to work under *partage*, but his plan would not be effective unless adopted by virtually *all* archaeologists who excavate outside their home countries, which isn't going to happen.

Cuno argues that nations are wrong when they attempt to trace a connection between antiquity and modern nation-states, or say that a particular modern nation has a particular connection to an ancient culture. Here, Cuno is less convincing. Certainly modern states have made false claims about the past, but to say that any attempt to connect a modern nation-state to a particular segment of antiquity is false is disingenuous. Antiquities are defined as objects created 150 years ago or more: By Cuno's definition, Britain would have no special claim on the Magna Carta, despite the fact that a clear connection *can* be made between the Great Charter of 1215 and the government of modern Britain.

Yet Cuno argues that any attempt by any nation-state to tie itself to antiquity is illegitimate, an attempt by the powerful to create legitimacy for their rule. Certainly he is correct that certain contemporary governments—Cuno highlights Turkey, China, and Iraq under Saddam Hussein—have twisted history to suit their purposes, but he maintains that such misappropriations of history are not simply abuses practiced by certain regimes but an inescapable characteristic of the modern nation-state. He denies the possibility that any nation is capable of taking an honest look at its past, and objectively examining its history. He seems also to ignore those modern nation-states which can legitimately

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trace their lineage—and find the roots of their system of government—in the history of their land long before the establishment of their modern state.

Antiquity, says Cuno, is our "common ancient heritage" and "cannot be subdivided and nationalized." This means that the Shang dynasty bronze he discusses in the preface is as much the heritage of the people of modern Britain as it is of the people of modern China. Similarly, a medieval German monstrance he mentions is as much the heritage of modern China as modern Germany.

Such arguments, of course, are in harmony with Cuno's ultimate goal: the elimination of sectarian division and violence by increasing our understanding of other cultures. Attempts to build a national identity grounded in the distant past are not just wrong, he argues, but pernicious, serving to create divisions between people by uniting the citizens of a particular state in the belief that they are "bound together by some collective genius that distinguishes them from everyone else in the world."

Well, while there is no denying that cultures do not arise autonomously, and while we humans certainly share a common heritage, denying the distinctiveness of ancient cultures strains credulity. The vases of classical Greece are different from the vases of ancient China, and the very fact that we can talk about various cultures' influencing each other argues that there are, indeed, distinct cultures.

Distinctions among ancient cultures, and connections between those cultures and modern states, do not necessarily lead to sectarian division. A strong identity, national or otherwise, is not a bar to appreciation of other cultures, or peaceful coexistence. We can appreciate others and value our shared humanity while retaining pride in our distinctive heritage. Still, James Cuno has performed a valuable service with this timely, intelligent, and provocative discussion of a vexing problem in modern cultural politics—a problem considerably older, in fact, than the Empress Eugénie's jeweled brooch. ♦

Who Are You?

Ignore the question at our peril. **BY JEREMY RABKIN**

Natan Sharansky attracted worldwide attention as a Soviet dissident in the 1970s, as a political prisoner in the 1980s, then as a member of the Israeli cabinet in the 1990s. He has been many things, but insists on the opening page of *Defending Identity*, "I never considered myself a writer." Yet here is his third book.

Defending Identity
Its Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy
by Natan Sharansky
Public Affairs, 304 pp., $26.95

His first, *Fear No Evil*, was an inspirational but highly personal memoir of his experience as a dissident and political prisoner in the Soviet Union. His second book, *The Case for Democracy*, published some 20 years later, drew on illustrations from his own experience of Soviet repression. But from the title down to its final pages, *The Case for Democracy* was a book offering confident prescriptions for the global strategy of the world's democratic states.

This new book seems to address some deficiencies in the argument of Sharansky's previous work. From the title onwards, *Defending Identity* is a bit defensive. "Identity" seems to be something that does not fit readily with "democracy," or something which, at least, rouses suspicion among democrats.

You might think a democrat would have to side with his own people, his own 'demos.' The democrats Sharansky tries to answer here, however, aren't for rule by the people, or even rule by the majority, so much as they are for universal human rights. But that was the very approach Sharansky himself seemed to embrace in his previous book, where he called for a coalition of free peoples against the governments oppressing the unfree.

The hope for freedom, he insisted, was universal, so the populations oppressed by dictators are potential allies of the free peoples, if only the free world finds the confidence to confront the dictators. It was an argument publicly embraced (along with its author) by President George W. Bush as he committed the United States to a counterinsurgency in Iraq.

Defending Identity has a different emphasis. Sharansky still defends the effort to liberate the Iraqi people—though with a somewhat sketchy disclaimer that more attention should have been paid to Sunni-Shia conflicts and other "identity" issues after the initial toppling of Saddam. But his main concern is the way progressive opinion, even among human rights advocates, has focused so much ire in recent years on the United States and, even more so, on Israel.

In his previous book, too, Sharansky criticized human rights advocates for moral blindness: By refusing to distinguish imperfections in generally democratic countries from governments resting entirely on repression, human rights advocates actually weakened the political coalition of democracies. This new book moves the argument to a different plane.

In *The Case for Democracy* Sharansky emphasized that the longing for freedom is universal because everyone would prefer to live in a free society rather than a "fear society." Here he acknowledges a large complication: Individuals don't just want to feel safe; they want to feel connected to something larger than themselves. They want to defend their "identity" as well as their personal safety.

Jeremy Rabkin, professor of law at George Mason University, is the author, most recently, of Law Without Nations? Why Constitutional Government Requires Sovereign States.

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So he criticizes the tendency among human rights advocates to demand public neutrality toward religion in ways that end up stifling religious identities. He criticizes the French law prohibiting women from wearing veils in French schools. He criticizes American liberals for worrying so much about "separation of church and state" that they end up suppressing or marginalizing the public expression of religious views. Restricting people in the name of human rights will repel potential allies in the cause of freedom.

Sharansky's deeper point is that people of strong "identity" aren't just potential allies. They are the people most ready to fight for their freedom. They are the people with the most courage, and he gives several examples from his prison experience. The prisoners most likely to resist intimidation were Pentecostals, Ukrainian nationalists, and so on. Their very particular commitments gave them very particular reasons to resist Soviet tyranny.

By contrast, those who are only for human rights are often unprepared to take risks for their cause. Campaigns for "peace" in the 1970s and '80s tended, as he notes, to advocate appeasement of the Soviet Union—and were, for that reason, encouraged and nurtured by the Kremlin (at least in the West). In a somewhat similar way, Sharansky protests, the cause of human rights has been hijacked at the United Nations by Islamic states, who subordinate all other concerns to their campaign against Israel. Western human rights advocates have accommodated this perverse priority rather than lose access to international forums or risk unpleasant confrontations with Islamist organizations.

Europeans, Sharansky warns, have come to see national and religious loyalties as obstacles to global undertakings and departures from a properly cosmopolitan spirit. Too often they think of the United States and Israel as obstacles to global harmony because they do not go along with global trends—most of all, the trend toward accommodating Islamist extremism. Those who have "democracy without identity" find it impossible to resist those who have "identity without democracy," and end up trying to appease them.

Sharansky makes his case in broad strokes. The broad images he paints are certainly recognizable. For all the high talk about human rights in Europe, there does not seem to be much stomach to fight for human rights in other countries, or even to take the necessary steps to defend freedom within Europe itself. There is surely some troubling deficiency in patriotic pride or civic spirit when a country like the Netherlands, long proud of its spirit of tolerance and asylum, essentially expels a controversial figure like Ayaan Hirsi Ali when she became the target of Islamist terror threats.

Natan Sharansky

Still, Sharansky's way of arguing his claims may leave some readers with remaining doubts. First, he relies on a very elastic or encompassing term when he speaks of "identity." It's a term he never clearly defines or defends (as a term) in *Defending Identity*. In modern usage, the term has the rhetorical force of the given, the irreducible, the fundamental. Your "identity" seems to be what defines you, what makes you what you are, so who could dispute "identity" without disrespect?

But there are all sorts of "identities" held with varying degrees of intensity, interpreted in various ways, even by those "identified" by the same "identity." Sharansky's argument is not simply for "identity" but for versions which are, at least, broadly compatible with political democracy and appreciative of its protections. History shows many versions of Christianity and Islam, of ethnic nationalisms, of socialism, and the like. But as soon as we acknowledge that there are different versions of various "identities" we must acknowledge that these are not simply "givens" but questions that invite thinking beyond their own boundaries.

Sharansky, himself, talks about the inspiration he drew while in Soviet prisons not only from the Psalms of David but from classics of world literature, from Aristophanes to Cervantes. In *Fear No Evil* he wrote at even more length about the "community of souls" who inspire each other across the ages by their writings, or sometimes, simply by their known deeds. That is, after all, an appeal to something that transcends "identity" in its usual sense.

Perhaps it follows that, if democracy has need of "identity," it also has need of people who have the imagination and understanding to lead "identities" in paths that are both durable and compatible with democracy. This might mean that democracy has need of people who are not just ordinary democrats. It is not a new thought, but still bracing.

Others may wonder if Sharansky's argument is not too much centered on Israeli experience. He devotes quite a few pages to attacking advocates of a "post-Zionist" approach to Israeli policy. He insists, as in *The Case for Democracy*, that there cannot be a reliable peace with a Palestinian entity that is not a true democracy. Here he also emphasizes that there cannot be peace with neighbors who demand that Israel give up its character as a Jewish state.

No other currently existing state is quite so threatened as Israel. Few others have such a complicated "identity"—partly, but not simply "religious," partly but not simply "ethnic," partly grounded in ancient tradition but not at all simply traditional or given. Sharansky takes it for granted that much of the world will gain understanding from considering Israel's case.

Not everyone, even in Western countries, would agree with Sharansky's claim that "an Israel with a strong Jewish identity will help guard the free world against its enemies." And he does not offer much explanation in defense of this claim. But it is also an old thought and may be true on more levels than Sharansky has broached in this brief, timely tract. ♦

KIKA SSO / CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION

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Track Record

A Japanese novelist races against his demons.

BY FRANKLIN FREEMAN

Haruki Murakami, the Japanese novelist whose work has been compared to that of Raymond Chandler and Franz Kafka, did not start out as a novelist. For a decade he ran his own jazz club in Tokyo. Then one day, while watching a baseball game, he thought perhaps he could write a novel. He did, entered it in a contest, and, after he had forgotten about it, learned he had won.

What I Talk About When I Talk About Running
A Memoir
by Haruki Murakami
translated by Philip Gabriel
Knopf, 175 pp., $21

He wrote another novel, sold his club, and became a full-time writer. At the same time he took up running because he was a three-pack-a-day smoker and gained weight when sedentary. He knew that if he planned on being a writer for long, he had better live a more healthy life.

So Murakami rejected Yeats's dictum that one must perfect the life or the art—although he does acknowledge there is an element of darkness in writing novels:

> Basically I agree with the view that writing novels is an unhealthy type of work. When we set off to write a novel, when we use writing to create a story, like it or not a toxin that lies deep down in all humanity rises to the surface. All writers have to come face-to-face with this toxin and, aware of the danger involved, discover a way to deal with it, because otherwise no creative activity in the real sense can take place.

Murakami's way of dealing with this toxin is through running and, recently, competing in triathlons. He doesn't say everyone should do it this way, but he does say that it is better to deal with it in a healthy way, rather than the usual writers' solutions: drinking, debauchery, etc.

Some would call this toxin by the traditional name of original sin, and suggest another healthy way of dealing with it is through prayer and repentance; others would call it the death wish and suggest psychotherapy. But Murakami exists in a world of his own making: Not that he literally believes he made the world, but that he writes from within a vacuum, as if he were the only person in the world and all his observations were written on a blank slate.

This is partly a matter of atmosphere, but it also shows in the lack of context that surrounds his memoir. Admittedly this is a memoir that focuses on only one aspect of his own life—he has discovered, he says, that when he writes about running he writes about himself—but there is a curious emptiness here. Murakami mentions his wife a few times, other runners, he quotes Raymond Chandler and mentions Hemingway; but mostly it's just him, his running and his writing. He admits he likes being alone—not unusual for writers—but when he gropes, fleetingly, into metaphysics he refers to nobody but himself, as if all the prophets, sages, and religious leaders (or Freud, for that matter) never said anything about the spiritual side of life.

But Murakami writes this way not out of pride or defiance: He takes no interest in certain things because he has to physically experience something to understand it. Or so he says.

I'm making this sound as though *What I Talk About* is devoid of humor, but anyone who reads Murakami knows that humor infuses his work:

> The weather's been strange in Japan this summer. . . . They say it's all because of global warming. Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't. Some experts claim it is, some claim it isn't. There's some proof that it is, some that it isn't. But still people say that most of the problems the earth is facing are, more or less, due to global warming. When sales of apparel go down, when tons of driftwood wash up on the shore, when there are floods and droughts, when consumer prices go up, most of the fault is ascribed to global warming. What the world needs is a set villain that people can point at and say, "It's all your fault!"

Haruki Murakami

PETR JOSEK / REUTERS

Murakami subscribes to no orthodoxy, whether global warming or anything else, but he is not a "negative" writer, critical of everything, praising nothing. He is a big fan of *The Great Gatsby* ("I never get tired of it, no matter how many times I read it.") and, in the tenor of his writing and running, resembles Jay Gatsby himself, as pictured in Fitzgerald's last paragraph: Alone, but reaching for a vision of paradise. ♦

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Petit's Gift

The day the Twin Towers enchanted New York.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The summer of 1974 was not a happy one in the United States, and nowhere did matters seem more grim than in New York City. Only a year away from a catastrophic insolvency, the city was a mess, with its pockmarked streets, its buildings and bridges beginning to look as though they might crumble, graffiti slathered over subway trains and platforms offering millions of riders the unwelcome sense that they were trapped inside a heavy-metal album cover. Central Park had become a grassless mud pit. The crime spike that had begun a decade earlier continued to spiral upward; everyone, it seemed, had been mugged at least once.

Man on Wire
Directed by James Marsh

And then, one morning in August, something inexplicably wonderful happened. A man appeared on a high wire between the twin towers of the recently completed World Trade Center. He walked between them for 45 minutes, nearly 1,400 feet above the ground, before being taken into police custody and then, just as quickly, released.

So vivid has the incident remained in my memory (I was 13 at the time) that I would have sworn under oath I had seen live footage that day of Philippe Petit's tightrope act cutting into the morning's *Gilligan's Island* reruns. In point of fact, there was no footage, and there are only a few photographs of the event. Perhaps my false memory is so vivid because every other piece of news in New York and elsewhere around that time was so unrelievedly sour—Richard Nixon resigned in disgrace the next day—that the contrast afforded by Petit's daring, clever, joyful, crazy, and exhilarating stunt has kept it fresh.

As Petit recounts in a compelling but slightly ponderous documentary called *Man on Wire*, all anybody wanted to ask him when he came down was "Why?"

It turns out there was no "why." Petit was a tightrope walker and he wanted to create the world's longest and most dangerous tightrope and walk across it. Doing so wasn't just a matter of mastering the old-time equilibrium trick performed in circuses from time immemorial; Petit had that down. His goal required him to become an industrial engineer. What kind of wire should he use? How, exactly, could one sling a wire from the roof of one building to the other? To which structure on the respective roofs of the North and South Towers should each end be attached? How could the wire be stabilized?

Once all those questions were answered, there was the small matter of getting into the Twin Towers, hauling equipment weighing nearly one ton up to the roof, and fixing the wire in the dead of night—all the while eluding security guards and cops and the like. Petit's team of helpers included two friends from Paris, two stoner Jewish hippies from Manhattan he met at a party, a guy with a handlebar mustache who worked in the building for the state insurance commissioner, and an Australian he met during a trip to Sydney a few years earlier when he strung a line across its Harbour Bridge.

Much of the movie is taken up with the team's heist-like hijinks the night before the wire walk, complete with fictionalized recreations of Petit and Company hiding under tarpaulins for hours on parallel floors in the parallel buildings. This is probably the only tack director James Marsh could have taken, since there is no footage of Petit's feat, and since the destruction of the Towers makes revisiting the scene of the crime impossible. But it does throw *Man on Wire* off balance, because the troubles they had were relatively petty compared to the dazzling originality and creativity of the high-wire act itself.

It is probably the best-reviewed movie this year, but I don't think it's being praised because of its own excellence; it's just that the event itself was so extraordinary that the minimally competent recounting of it here has proved to be enough to cause critics and audiences to swoon.

Marsh gives us a little bit of the flavor of what it was like for New Yorkers that day and the days that followed, with some news footage of one of the arresting cops talking to reporters in a tone of dazed disbelief about how he realized, standing there on the roof of the North Tower, that he was witness to an act no one had ever attempted before or would ever attempt again. But Marsh doesn't go very far with it. And that's a pity, because what Philippe Petit did on that August day in 1974 was offer a depressed city a moment of dazzled wonderment so powerful that, 34 years later, I still can't help but think that I, too, was a witness to it, even though I know I wasn't. ♦

ASSOCIATED PRESS / ALAN WELNER

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"The Edwards household has been a scene of turmoil and tension since John, 55, first began revealing the truth about his affair with former campaign aide, Rielle Hunter, 44." **—People, August 13, 2008**

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